A MODEL FOR MALE PARTICIPATION IN AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH

Charles Milton Pee

BS, Francis Marion University, 1979
M.Div., Duke Divinity School, 1983

Mentors
Dr. Ricky Woods, D.Min.
Dr. Terry Thomas, D.Min.

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Mentors

Dr. Ricky Woods

Dr. Terry Thomas

Date:_____

Approved:

_____

_____

Faculty Mentors:

_____
Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....v

DEDICATIONS.....vi

INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER

1. MINISTRY FOCUS.....3
2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL..... 25
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS.....37
4. METHODOLOGY.....112
5. FIELD EXPERIENCE.....120
6. REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....125

APPENDIX

A. FRIENDSHIP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY.....131

B. PROJECT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.....135

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....140

ABSTRACT

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This project of ministry will examine the increase of male participation in an African American church where there had been serious male absence. Twenty men in the church representing mixed income, educational and age levels who became members of the church at different time periods were given an Interview Questionnaire. The findings show that when men were given a ministry task, they were enthusiastic when the task was accomplished. They were willing to be responsible and embrace more tasks of ministry. Men want to participate in the church and ministry when they are accepted, loved, understood and trusted with responsibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer is thankful to God for the opportunity and challenge to serve in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

He is thankful for his parents, Henry and Alma Pee, for their love, support and encouragement to be all he can be. He is thankful for his brothers, James (Pop) Pee and Franklin Barber for always believing in him.

He is thankful for his wife, Beneature and their daughter, Crystal whose love kept the writer on his feet.

The writer is thankful to the Friendship Church Family for being a real family of love, spiritual support and helping to empower him to be a Christian man.

The writer is thankful to his mentors, Dr. Ricky Woods and Dr. Terry Thomas who have inspired his academic growth and spiritual development. He is thankful to Reverend O. T. Hill for his knowledge and encouragement. He is thankful for the support and encouragement of his peers in the Woods/Thomas Mentor Group.

The writer is thankful for Dean Harold Hudson and the entire UTS Family for encouragement. He is thankful for his professional associates: Dr. Reginald Dawkins, Dr. Walter Butler and Dr. Franklin Colelough who have offered great insights.

The writer is thankful for the church secretary, Sandra Parker, for her support and efforts in this project.

DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry Project is dedicated to the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and to the late Dr. Rufus J. Daniels (mentor and friend). And to President Luns C. Richardson and the Morris College family.

To the Centerville Missionary Baptist Church (The writer's home Church) and to Beneature (wife), Crystal (daughter), Alma Pee (mama) Henry Ed Pee (father) and Mazie Booth (mother-in-law).

Finally, this project is dedicated to family, friends and countless others who have been a blessing in the writers life.

INTRODUCTION

The ministry model for this Doctor of Ministry project designed to increase male participation in the African American church. Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Conway, South Carolina is the context for this research. This congregation was established in 1950. Throughout the history of the church, it has had the reputation of being friendly, compassionate and welcoming. While the church was regarded as a people's church, the pastor/researcher and the church leadership always recognized that there was a lack in male participation.

It is a surprise that over a period of years, men attendance grew on an average more than any other group in the church. Males grew from ten percent to approximately forty percent. The focus of this research is to explain the increase of male participation in the Friendship Church. Retrospective research is done to discover and explain factors that influenced and promoted greater male participation. Retrospective research is defined for this purpose as a research method in which the factors related to the development of a particular outcome (for example, growth in male participation in the church), are studied after the outcome has already occurred. There has been little research on the participation of African American males in church. The Friendship congregation acknowledges the significant increase of males. The Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary has helped to motivate and prepare the researcher to do serious and reflective research about male membership and participation in the African American Church.

This research is qualitative. The pastor/researcher interviewed a selection of men from the congregation to examine the reliability of the hypothesis. Twenty men were interviewed of diverse ages and educational and economic levels.

The research seeks to promote a better understanding of African American male's and how to enhance greater male participation. It is hoped that this research will provide some insight, programs and methods to enhance a greater male presence and participation in African American church life.

Chapter One emphasizes the ministry focus which includes how the model of ministry became a project for research and an explanation of the research context.

Chapter Two presents the state of the art in the model of ministry examined in this research. This chapter is a literature review of academic and practical work done related to the model of ministry.

Chapter Three is a theoretical foundation for male participation in the African American church. Historical, biblical and theological foundations are presented which support the model of ministry being studied.

Chapter Four presents research methodology and design. The hypothesis to be tested, interview questionnaire, subjects in the study and evaluation are presented.

Chapter Five discusses the field experience. Results of the interviews are analyzed in light of the hypothesis.

Chapter Six presents the researcher's reflections, summary and conclusion of the project strengths, weaknesses and a summary of the research are shared.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Journey

Early Years

The writer was born in Marion, South Carolina. Their home was filled with love and encouragement. Whatever his parents lacked in education, they made it up in love and support. His dad, Henry Ed Pee, made it through the third grade and his mother, Alma Pee, was a real scholar completing the eighth grade.

The writer's parents grew up in the early part of the twentieth century when opportunities for education were very limited for African-Americans. They believed in and constantly stressed getting a good education. Education was viewed as the gate to the future and a productive life. We heard the statement often that *If you get it in your head, nobody can take it from you.*

The writer grew up with his brother, James Henry Pee, who was two years older. Sometimes they were rivals but most of the time, they were very supportive of each other. They had an older brother, Franklin Barber, who was a teenager when they were born. Franklin loved them very much and was always encouraging them to be good children. He wanted them to do the best they could in every way.

The writer's grandmother, Lula Barber, was always a great influence in his life. She loved all of her grandchildren and she knew just how to spoil each of them. The

writer stayed with her at night from eighth through the twelfth grade because she was alone. She helped to shape who he would become. Even though the writer's grandmother had no formal training and could not read or write, she raised all of her sisters and brothers because their parents died when they were young. The writer was always amazed at the love and commitment his grandparents had. He learned lots of *folk wisdom* from his grandmother since his grandfather died while he was very young. She would say *Good manners will take you where money will not. Be kind to the people on your way up because you will meet the same people on your way down.*

The writer and his siblings were taught to respect seniors or elders. It was instilled in them that disrespectful children would always come to a bad end. The writer believed it!

Church Influence

The writer grew up in the Centerville Baptist Church where his father was a Deacon. The Centerville Church was small; seventy-five to eighty people attended worship twice per month. Only Sunday church school was held on the other two Sundays. The members of Centerville were caring, supportive and nurturing.

The writer's first Sunday school teacher was Mrs. Pansy Williams. Nobody was like Mrs. Pansy. Whatever she said, the writer believed. She was always kind with the biggest smile that he had ever seen. He really believed that Jesus had to be nice and kind like Mrs. Pansy. The older he got, the more that he realize how important the lessons and relationships of his early years had become.

Persons like Deacon Orrie Graves, Reverend Alma Johnson, Deacon Marion Pee, Mrs. Mary Reed, Cousin Sissy Pee and countless others were always supportive and kind. The writer is forever indebted to all they shared with him.

Preaching was always a special moment. The writer was thrilled and excited about preaching. The ministers were enthusiastic and dramatic in their delivery. As a boy, he did not understand all that was happening but he knew it was special. The central idea was gripping and memorable.

The Conversion

Sunday school was the major teaching time in the Centerville Church. Persons took a keen interest in the lessons. At the age of fifteen, the writer became one of the teachers in the Adult Class. He found this task challenging and yet stimulating. The teaching task helped the writer to grow and mature in the faith. It gave him a better understanding of salvation. He surely needed a better understanding.

The writer was confused about conversion. During revivals, a mourner's bench was used. Persons who wanted to be saved knelt down to a chair. Ministers, Deacons and other members laid hands on their head while they prayed and sang and sang and prayed. Some persons did not get up too fast. Getting up was supposed to be the sign that you had religion. The writer was afraid to try that method. He was afraid that nothing would happen and he would be eternally lost. But his father and Deacon Orrie Graves assured him at the age of fourteen that he could make a decision for Jesus Christ and He would save him. One Sunday morning, the writer said yes to God in faith and became a candidate for baptism. After baptism, the writer would receive the right hand of fellowship to the Church.

It was after his conversion decision that he kept studying and praying to understand his conversion experience. His early years in the Centerville Church enabled him to understand his personal relationship with God and what it means to live. He was taught to have a healthy respect for God but not to be terrified. God was to be understood as a loving parent. Many of the ideas gained in his early years are still a part of him on a personal level in his pastoral ministry and in his teaching as a college instructor.

Many persons that he knew growing up, shared frightening stories about what they had been taught about God. Their ideas often were that God wanted to destroy, humiliate and hurt us. These ideas made the writer wonder about the love of God. He also questioned the meaning of *Hell and Brimstone*.

The writer came to understand early in life that God is a God of love. God believes in all and desires the best for us. We do not have to do anything to be loved by God. All we have to do is accept what God offers through our Lord Jesus Christ. Once we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, life is to be lived in gratitude and thanksgiving. The crucial decision for us is to say yes to God in and through our total being. The gift of salvation that God offers to us is precious. We cannot earn it and we are not worthy of it. The gift is ours just by declaring our yes.

The Call

At the age of five or six, the writer's greatest goal in life was to be a preacher. He always sat up front in the *amen* corner. It seemed natural to him. There was a unique sense of God when the preacher was preaching. The writer was captured and claimed in that moment of presentation and celebration. It is hard to explain, but deep inside his spirit, he wanted to be a preacher. This yearning stayed with him. As a teenager, the

writer began to focus on becoming a teacher or a business person. But in his spirit, he never lost the yearning to be a preacher.

His classmates would often tease me by saying, "You are going to be a preacher". The writer would put up a mild protest but knew they were more truthful than he wanted to admit.

The writer played basketball in the tenth through the twelfth grades. Taft Watson, the writers' basketball coach, was always serious about sports, the Church and God. His values always meant a great deal to the writer. He would never have practice on Wednesdays because he went to Prayer Meeting on Wednesday night. His talks with players were like a father, teacher, and brother. He knew how to relate to young people and to this very day we are still close. The writer values his opinions and insights. The more the writer tried to flee from the ministry, it seemed like the more he kept running into God.

The writer enrolled in Erskine College after high school. The first weeks of college were unsettling emotionally. He missed his parents and his brother. He tried to give his studies his best effort but college was different from high school. The writer made some friends and was trying out for the basketball team. One Saturday evening, the writer was out with three friends from the team and there was an accident. The writer was hurt very badly. His injuries included a fractured skull, a concussion, a broken cheek bone, a broken nose, a broken jaw, an injured eye, a broken collar bone, broken ribs, a collapsed lung, a ruptured bladder, a fractured pelvis and a broken thigh bone. The writer stayed unconscious for almost a week. He almost died. His stay in the hospital was two and a half months. He was in a body cast for two months at home. He did a lot of soul

searching. What was his purpose? What was his destiny? Did God have a purpose for his life? Was his brokenness leading him to some higher calling? The writer's recovery was slow but he recovered physically. But inwardly, there was a deeper restlessness. His restlessness was real but not totally clear.

The writer transferred to Francis Marion University where he had to start over again in 1975. He was determined to make it. Like most students, he wasn't sure what he would major in. At first, it was Business, then Political Science, and then Sociology. Sociology stirred his soul. It seemed to shed light on his religious convictions that everybody was somebody and everybody really mattered.

The writer's spirit was coming alive with religious sensitivity. He graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology and a minor in Political Science. But in his senior year, he took several philosophy courses. Something clicked in his soul. He sensed something special in his destiny. Course work became unusually interesting and meaningful. By the time he graduated, he had taken enough philosophy courses for another minor. These were courses that he took only because he wanted to.

Dr. James Hall and Dr. James Von Frank were the Philosophy professors who shaped the writer's thinking the most. The idea which captured him the most was the search for *meaning in life*. No life can be lived without the quest for meaning. In that sense, every life is religious. The central quest for every life is the quest for meaning. Meaning was the quest for ancient Jesus, the Early Church, every religion and even those who embrace atheism. This idea has been used to help students see that this quest for understanding life is not that different from the faith communities of the Bible in their

quest to understand God, humanity, life and death. Life is interpreted according to one's faith.

What a person sees in life is determined by the faith and commitments of a person. Every person has some center of value. Whether that center of value is God, Jesus, money, fame or popularity, everybody has some center of value. Whatever that center of value is, is that person's God. Religion then is inescapable, unavoidable and inevitable.

The writer's own religious quest was on fire even though he kept quiet about it in undergraduate school. In his final semester at Francis Marion, Dr. Ingram Parley asked, "What do you intend to do after graduation?" For the first time in his life, the writer gave an answer that startled him. He said, "I've thought about going to seminary." That would mean that he would be a preacher. Dr. Parmley, his Sociology Professor, asked, "Do you want to go to Duke?" The writer's heart was pounding. He really told him, "Yes, I want to go to Duke." What a surprise!

The writer visited Duke Divinity School. He was excited and scared at the same time. He felt unworthy. He wondered how he could be a preacher with his shortcomings. This was his internal struggle. He talked with his father and Coach Watson. He was looking for answers, support and insight. Both gave him the same response, "Only you and God can decide." The writer struggled in his soul. He really wanted to be a preacher. He felt inadequate and broken, but really wanted to be a servant for God.

The writer felt called by God and believed he was called; but needed to be sure. His idea of being a minister was that he/she had to be perfect. When he looked at himself,

he did not see perfection. He saw a decent person. He saw a person who was trying to be true to God but still had faults and failures.

The writer enrolled in Duke Divinity School in 1980 with excitement and fear. After about a year of intense soul-searching, he came to realize that nobody is absolutely perfect. He accepted the call to the ministry. He preached his initial sermon on December 7, 1980. The writer's years in Divinity School were intellectually stimulating and spiritually rewarding.

He grew in his understanding of ministry and personal religious development. He came to understand that ministry is reaching out to others in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. Ministry begins with loving people. One cannot minister if one does not love people. Every person is acceptable unto God. Every person is loved by God. A crucial issue in ministry is enabling persons to accept his or her acceptability.

The writer lived with his brother, Franklin, and his family during his first year at Duke. He did not have enough money to rent a place to stay. Franklin had just moved to Durham, North Carolina from New Jersey. He had just enough space for me. Living with him for a year gave the writer a chance to get settled and to find his way. What a blessing that was!

The writer met Oliver Hill at Duke. He was a real friend who encouraged the writer and kept telling the writer that he could do it. His friendship has helped to keep the writer on his feet through the years. Oliver Hill had a lot of experience as a preacher and pastor. He was always willing to share his experiences and insights.

The writer served in several internships throughout his seminary years for financial reasons. Many students complained about having to do two internship

experiences. The writer was very thankful for the internships in helping him to meet his financial obligations. He served as a chaplain-intern in a prison for a year and a half, a campus minister for two years, and two summers as a student-intern in two churches. These internships enabled the writer to put into practice various aspects of ministry.

Prison ministry helped the writer to see the lives of persons who had made bad choices and were living out the consequences. Every day at the prison offered the writer new challenges, pains and insights. Every resident has a story to share. When the residents opened up about what they had done as a crime, the writer was both disturbed about the crime and compassionate for the residents. Sometimes, it was very clear to the writer that people outside the prison gates were more like the persons inside than they realized. People's motivations are often the same. The reason many persons do not commit certain crimes is because they are afraid of getting caught. The writer often wondered where he would have ended up if he had not had the family life, church life and community life that helped to instill good values, Christian principles and positive goals. The writer came to the realization that human beings make bad choices and others want to, even when they do not have the courage. But in spite of our faults, failures, and thoughts, we are children of God. We are loved and cannot undo being children of God. It is apparent to the writer that the key is being who we were made to be.

In 1982, the writer served in an internship under Dr. Rufus Daniels at the Friendship Baptist Church in Conway, South Carolina. Dr. Daniels was very caring, supportive and encouraging. He shared with the writer from the experiences gained as a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Daniels and the church were very kind and receptive to the writer. The writer really thought that this internship experience

would be the end of the relationship for him and this church. It is interesting how ordinary encounters take on external significance.

The writer went back to school to finish seminary in the fall of 1982. Dr. Daniels came to Durham to see a sister who was sick. He came to see the writer also. During this visit, Dr. Daniels informed the writer that he had lung cancer. The writer was hurt, shocked and broken. He asked the writer to come to the church every Sunday to assist him. His condition got worse. He kept insisting that the writer get ordained. He got together with the writer's pastor, Reverend Richard Green, along with associational leaders and the writer was ordained in December of 1982. Dr. Daniels preached the ordination sermon. He shared with the congregation how sick he was but he was trusting in God and not afraid to face the future. The writer did all he could to assist Dr. Daniels and the Friendship Church as his condition got worse.

Ministry as Pastor

Dr. Rufus Daniels died in April of 1983. The Church called the writer as pastor in March of 1983. The writer was amazed later when he found out that Dr. Daniels had met with the church officers in January of 1983. He shared with them that after he died, he wanted the church to call the writer as the next pastor. The writer simply was speechless. He kept asking himself, "Why me?"

The writer was twenty-six years old, single, and a pastor. Shortly after the church called the writer as pastor, he graduated from Duke Divinity School. It seemed like brokenness kept showing up but blessings also kept showing up, too.

The pastorate presented one challenge after another. Dr. Daniels had served as pastor for twenty-three years. It was clear to the writer that he had to be patient. The

writer realized that drastic changes made too fast would send him packing. Members of the congregation were kind in their appreciation. In many respects, they were pastors to the writer in helping him find his own leadership foundation.

The Friendship Church began to grow. Old bills were paid off. The writer really felt blessed. He also realized that as the church grew numerically and financially, conflicts seemed to be rising. It appeared that people in the church liked the growth of the church but resented it at the same time. The writer was caught in the middle. Younger people liked the progress. Some of the older members were trying to hold onto the traditions of yesterday. It was a difficult balancing act. Over time, it was difficult to know member's commitments in the progress of the church. The writer kept trying to be inclusive and caring. He tried not to get locked into any one family or clique. The church continued to grow.

We were able to keep things moving in spite of personal feelings and church conflicts. Members often were angry with the writer but he realized that the anger was not about him. Outsiders who joined the church helped them to outgrow much of the internal division and conflict.

Marriage

The writer met a young lady, Beneature Booth, and they started dating. That was the talk of the church and the community. She had an excellent background in the church and came from a strong family. She was a speech pathologist in the public school system of Horry County, South Carolina. Then it happened—in June 1987 we were married. The writer was not totally sure how the church would respond since they had

known me for a few years as a single pastor. But adjustments were made. It helped a great deal to have someone to share my internal struggles.

Family Tragedy

The writer's brother, James, was killed in May of 1990. He had begun dating a young lady. A previous boyfriend of the woman chased them off the road and James was killed. The writer got a real taste of small town, good old boy law enforcement. Two eye witnesses and the police report stated that [redacted] was driving the vehicle that struck the car which caused James' death. The sheriff refused to make an arrest. This situation brought grief, hurt and anger. The writer became so consumed by this tragedy that he wondered how he would deal with it emotionally and spiritually. After a two year struggle, the State Law Enforcement Division finally made an arrest and [redacted] was convicted. He had to serve almost a year in prison. He was relieved that he had to serve some time. A big struggle for the writer was to keep my elderly parents hopeful and strong. The brokenness over his brother's death was very different from anything he had ever faced. Preaching, teaching and sick visitation helped the writer to face his grief. The writer's grief provided him with a spiritual sensitivity that he was able to share with others in ministry. His brokenness empowered him to reach out to others in their brokenness.

Family Disappointment

The writer discovered that personal concerns do not stop because of pastoral responsibilities or other public concerns. Beneature, the writer's wife had several

miscarriages. It seemed so unfair that persons who wanted children could not have them and persons who could care less, could have all they wanted.

In the midst of personal concerns, the writer's father died in 1994. Years earlier, the writer's father mentioned that he wanted me to deliver his eulogy. With much gratitude, fear and pain, the writer delivered his eulogy. In the writer's brokenness that day, he was sure that he had been blessed with a dad, friend and spiritual supporter.

Hope Restored

In 1995, a miracle happened. Crystal Meagan Pee was born. Prior to the birth, the writer's family had been hoping, praying and waiting to get pregnant. At times, they felt it would never happen but to their surprise, a baby girl showed up: healthy, pretty, lovely and loved. The writer was sure that only God had made this birth possible. It is almost unbelievable that a child can be born and affects every aspect of your life.

Instructor

The writer has been an instructor at Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina since 1987. It has challenged him to make the scriptures relevant to young lives. Many young people are growing up without a strong family foundation. Many have very little understanding of the Bible. It is even more troubling that many young people who have grown up in the church have very little understanding of the background and message of the Bible. The classroom has influenced the writer to make his preaching informative; the church has influenced him to make sure his teaching provides meaning and purpose for real life. The writer is fascinated with what happens to lives when persons are gripped by

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Words cannot describe how you feel when you see persons become hopeful and enjoyable.

Mother's Health Declines

The writer could see his mother getting slower and weaker as the years went by. The day came when she was no longer able to walk because of a bad hip. She needed a hip replacement but doctors refused to consider it because of her age and a weak heart. The writer kept her at home for almost two years. It was difficult to get persons to sit with her every day and night. It was also very expensive. He did not want to put her in a nursing facility. But whatever he had to do, he wanted his mother to be satisfied. As time went by, she recognized that she was not getting better. She said to him, "You cannot afford to keep me at home and you cannot handle me by yourself. I would be more at ease in a nursing facility." The writer knew that she was right but that still did not make it easy.

In 2004, the writer's mother was placed in a nursing facility. She has been very comfortable in the facility. She has many visitors. The writer tried to see her at least three times per week and called her every day. He made every effort to keep her from feeling abandoned or alone. The writer found it very strengthening to sit, talk, watch television and even sleep in her presence.

A Close Call

In 2006, the writer went to the National Baptist Convention in Dallas, Texas. He felt weak but thought that he just needed some rest. Every day, it seemed he got weaker.

Reverend Hill and the writer were traveling together. On that Friday, they went to the Emergency Room. The writer could hear the doctors talking about him but they were not talking to him. One doctor said, "We need to place him in Intensive Care as soon as possible." The writer thought to himself, "This is serious". He was informed the next day that he was diabetic. He had been close to going into a coma. The writer's wife came to Dallas on that Saturday. The writer did not know then how close he had come to dying. He stayed in Intensive Care for five days.

Reverend Hill's sister, Carolyn, had driven them around during the week of the convention, died that Sunday night while the writer was still in the hospital. He was not told until he got out of the hospital. He was shocked at how much had happened in such a short period of time. It was brokenness on top of brokenness.

The writer returned to Conway. Gradually, he recovered and got stronger. The church members were very patient and supportive. He exercised every day and in about two months he was completely off all diabetic medication. He was very thankful that he had risen from brokenness one more time. His faith was that God had indeed made a difference for me.

Where the Spirit Leads

The writer is convinced that God is using all that he has been through to be a blessing to others. Every situation of brokenness inspires, empowers and enables him to reach out to others in their time of brokenness. He is in agreement with Harry Fosdick that preaching is counseling. Preaching as the word of God speaks to the needs, pains, grief, alienation, loneliness and brokenness of people. The writer also believes that preaching gives opportunity to counsel and to share. Listening to people, informs the

preaching moment in such a way that they find a message for their hurts and pains. God can use every aspect of life to empower, enlighten and inspire. He believes the opportunity and challenge to do effective ministry demand all we can bring to it.

Life is tragic. Life presents every life with brokenness, disappointment and feeling of unworthiness. God is using the writer to understand the plight of people and to speak to the human plight out of the eternal Word of God.

Church life has become full of so much formality and superficiality. Many church members are not so much concerned with real faith in our Lord and sincere fellowship. Many church folk do not really focus on discipleship. The writer believes the Spirit of Christ is leading him to develop and equip church members to be real disciples. Real disciples make other disciples. Like the disciples of the early church, we can turn this world upside down.

Every believer ought to take charge of his or her faith. Each person needs to be equipped to be a responsible disciple, committed church member, and a loving servant. The writer feels challenged and led to empower believers to live up to their full potential as children of God. To God Be the Glory.

Ministry Context

The writer's context for Ministry is the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Conway, South Carolina. The church had its beginning in 1950 under the pastorate of Reverend G. Going Daniels. The church evolved out of a *church split* where Reverend G. Going Daniels served as pastor.

Overview

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church has always had the reputation of being a very *friendly* church. There has always been an attitude of friendliness, kindness, and warmth towards guests and to some extent within the church. Historically, the church was composed of three or four major families. These families usually worked together harmoniously, however, conflict was created by these families based on power struggles to control the church and/or decision-making.

Reverend G. Going Daniels was the founding pastor. Members easily accepted the idea that he was the bearer of authority within the church. "African American congregations.... expect the pastor to take a preeminent leadership role"[1] After his pastorate, nobody could live up to the standards of the founding pastor. Even though, his son, Reverend Rufus Daniels, succeeded him as pastor, founding members of the church never forgave him for not being his father.

The church continued to grow numerically and organizationally under Reverend Rufus Daniels (Appendix A). The church maintained the reputation of *friendliness* throughout the community. Reverend Rufus Daniels was a people-oriented person. He was able to move the church forward in a larger ministry mission goal and increased church ministries such as a Learning Center, Children's Choir, Bible Study, and Christmas Worship.

The writer has served as pastor of the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church since April 1983. The Church has grown from one hundred twenty five to approximately five

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[1]Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 170.

hundred. Numerical growth has challenged the church to be inclusive, increase ministries, set long and short ranged goals, reach the youth of the community and become involved in health ministry.

Numerical growth and increased diversity of the membership has enabled the church to out-grow many of the power and personal conflicts that harmed the church. "Rather than assuming that conflict is destructive, Parsons and Leas argue that constructive tensions form the basis for dynamic ministry".[2]

Diversity

The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is a very diverse congregation educationally, economically, age levels and income. The educational levels are very proportional for the various age levels without significant differences. The average yearly income levels show a significant difference of $6,558.99 for the 25 and under age level, $44,013.25 for the 26-36 age level, and $15,479.84 for the 70 plus age level. Yearly income for other age levels is about $30,000 (Appendix C).

Females make up approximately two-thirds of the congregation while males make up about one-third. Even though women have a strong majority, the percentage of men has increased from approximately ten percent over the past twenty years. The diversity of the congregation is seen in the strength of the various age levels and a better representation of males in the membership (Appendix C).

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[2]Ibid., 120.

African-American Culture

The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is an African-American Church. This does not mean that other races are not welcome to worship or become members. African-American culture and issues are addressed in positive and encouraging ways. "Culture is who we are and all the ways in which we reinforce and recreate who we are".[3] Culture is what people believe, how they live and how they see themselves. African-American culture is real culture like any other. The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church embraces African-American culture throughout its mission, ministries and goals.

Conway Population

The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is located in Conway, South Carolina. Conway is located in Horry County about fourteen miles from Myrtle Beach, a thriving tourist area. The population of Conway is 15,894 with 6,644 being African-American. Horry County has a population of 238,493 with 35,774 (15%) being African-American (Appendix B).

Race is still a factor that cannot be ignored in Conway, Horry County and South Carolina. In general, people think and live out issues of race. In education, politics, and social situations, race continues to be a dominant factor. Issues of racial equality, self-esteem, employment, promotion, etc. continue to be at the forefront of a person's mentality and actions.

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[3]Ibid., 78.

Leadership

The leadership in the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church reflects the diversity of its membership. A vision for the church is to be inclusive of the total membership. It is true that "…. The vision grows out of a process of dialogue that fosters broad ownership of it."[4]

Deacons, trustees, clerks, committee leaders and members, prayer meeting leaders and special ministry leaders represent a broad spectrum of the church's membership. Great effort is made to make sure that no family, group or age level is overly represented.

Move and Expansion

The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church moved to a new edifice in September 1993. The church had dreamed and hoped for many years to build another building for worship. An increase in church membership helped to increase church income. The church moved from Ninth Avenue to Grainger Road in Conway, South Carolina.

This move to a new building helped the church to embrace new possibilities for ministry, growth and discipleship. The move enabled the membership to leave behind the intensity of the old conflicts and clashes of the membership's early years. New members had a deeper sense of belonging, appreciation and ownership. This move has been a blessing to the church's ministry by empowering the church to be more inclusive.

In 2007, the church completed a Christian Life Center in addition to a gymnasium, a fitness room, a technology classroom, a commercial kitchen, three classrooms, and the enlargement of the sanctuary. These additions have promoted more

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[4]Ibid., 184.

fitness and recreational activities. All age groups have taken advantage of these additional activities in and beyond the church since persons from the community have been invited to participate without a fee. The church expansion has broadened the church's ministry to its members and to the community (Appendix A).

Worship

The church began an additional worship experience on Sunday morning at 7:45 A.M. in June 2006. This effort was to accommodate persons who could not attend worship at 11:00 A.M. and to reach others who preferred an early worship experience. The early worship service averages one hundred per Sunday while the regular 11:00 A.M. worship averages two hundred and sixty. These two worship services have increased the work of leaders and choirs. The two worship services have also provided more opportunities for participation for more members of the church.

Mission and Goals

The Friendship Church's mission is to reach the un-churched while caring for and nurturing the total membership of the church. Great effort continues to be made to enable persons to recognize the need for God and the need for fellowship with other believers. Members are encouraged to see church life as a growing and disciple-making fellowship. Evangelism is a major goal for the congregation. Christian Education is central for each member's growth, facing life issues and being the church.

All members are encouraged to take charge of their spiritual development by making Christian Education a priority in their lives. This effort is a real quest for the future. Pastoral care is the involvement of the total church in caring for people and

empowering them to meet their needs in the spirit of Christ. Pastoral care is not confined to the pastor, ministers or officers. The goal is for every member to be a part of this great effort. Members have a greater sense of satisfaction in a church when they know that they are loved and cared for. When members are concerned and care for each other, the sense of family is deepened and the un-churched are attracted to a caring fellowship which welcomes new members. The mission of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is to be "inspired by the Holy Spirit, to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to all humanity through worship, Christian Education, Evangelism and service."

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

In this chapter, the writer will review articles, journals and books that served as a literature review and formed the basis for the research on the subject of male empowerment. It was important for the writer to perform a thorough review of source documents in order to add to the body of knowledge that already existed regarding increasing male participation in the life of the African American church.

In the book *Liberation Theology,* Robert Brown McAfee shows how Liberation Theology emphasizes the justice of God in the Bible. This work recognizes that committed followers of Jesus Christ must be concerned for the plight of the poor and oppressed. Brown's work reveals that Liberation Theology is not confined to Black Theologians or to the United States. It also identifies a critical aspect of Black men's empowerment; they must have a sense of freedom, self-worth and liberation.

James Cone draws on recognizing the importance of community in his book, My *Soul Looks Back.* This book offers great insight to the spiritual and academic development of James H. Cone and serves as a parallel for the development of all men. He emphasizes the reality that he is grounded in the black community. Cone outlines his understanding of Black Theology and why real suffering must be addressed.

The Shape of Zion: Leadership and Life in Black Churches by Michael Dash and Christine D. Chapman provides an analysis of six historically Black denominations. This

work also offers insights and possibilities for doing ministry in the Black church context. Many ideas about ministry are confirmed while many others are challenged. This is a very helpful work for church administration and ministry in general. This work was helpful in understanding the uniqueness of ministry in the black church.

John Drane is the author of *Introducing the New Testament.* In this offering, Drane provides background information on the culture and beliefs faced by the early church and places strong emphasis on the expectations of Christians. Knowing the culture and beliefs of the early church which was primarily populated by men is significant in reintroducing men to a commitment to serve in the 21st century church.

James Efird book, *The Old Testament Writing: History, Literature and Interpretation* help the reader get through all of the difficulties of biblical study with great understanding. This book places emphasis on the faith of the Hebrews in historical and cultural context. This book is scholarly, clear and meaningful.

The biography of Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood by Samuel G. Freedman in *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church* is a necessary read for all African American male pastors. Freedman gives the reader insight into what can happen in the life of a person totally committed to God. It reveals what happened in the St. Paul Community Baptist Church and what can happen in a church when there is vision. This biography also reveals what can happen in a church and society when Black men are empowered and encouraged. This work reveals the positive possibilities when black men are accepted and trusted. Real leadership empowers those who are being led.

David Emmanuel Goatley's book *Black Religion, Black Theology: The Collected Essays of J. Deotis Roberts* provides clear insight about Roberts' understanding of

Liberation Theology. Roberts stands firmly within the African American church. He is scholarly and yet maintains practical insight to ministry within the church. Roberts is powerful in uniting scholarship and practice. It is necessary for Black men to know and understand the tenants of liberation theology and why it is important to walk in itspossibility.

Vincent Harding is one of many authors to write on an aspect of the life of Martin Luther King. In his book, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero,* Harding presents Martin Luther King as the real person rather than one who is larger than life. The real person fought and struggled with real issues of inequality, economic wrongs and personal pains. Harding seeks to recapture the real person and struggles that have been forgotten. This work enables a person to realize the greatness of a hero that few people understood in his lifetime and serves to give Black men something to strive for.

Introduction to the Bible by John Hayes is a thorough introduction to Christianity, Judaism and their biblical literature. Hayes does strong theological analysis of major persons and events of the Bible as the framework of understanding how God moves in and through people in order for God's salvific plan to unfold. This work is scholarly, readable and very useful enabling the reader to study in the proper context.

The African American preacher has recently been a point of contention in religious circles. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. in his book *Images of the Black Preacher* presents and analyzes positive and negative images of the Black preacher in the African American church context. According to Hicks, negative images and stereotypes of the Black preacher can be traced historically and also serve to fuel the broader society's negative views about the Black church promoting social and political change. Hicks emphasizes

that preaching is the most important thing that the Black preacher does. There is power in images held by people when the word of God goes forth with conviction. Painting images from the pulpit based on the word of God determines how persons are identified by others.

Strengthening the Black family is a key factor for Black empowerment. In *Multidimensional Ministry for Today's Black Family,* Johnny B. Hill says that the Black family provides structure and stability in the Black community. Hill also says that the Church must play a major role in making the Black family stronger. This work shows that the Black church and Black family are keys to strengthening the Black community.

T. D. Jakes makes the claim that there is much confusion about the purpose of men in the American society. In his book, *Loose That Man and Let Him Go,* Jakes provides Biblical examples where men were failures in some way; but, hope, salvation and restoration are found in Jesus Christ. Jakes encourages African American men of today that delivered men are loosed for life and service.

God In the Ghetto, written by William A. Jones reveals the impact of racism upon Black Americans. He emphasizes that God is on the side of the oppressed. He states that the church, too, should be concerned and involved in liberating those who are powerless and in the ghetto. This work reveals that liberation should never be forsaken by the church. Liberation of the oppressed is a real work and ministry of the church.

Jawanza Kunjufu says in *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries,* that ministries for Black men are critical to the survival of the church. Kunjufu does an outstanding job in his focus on ministries for Black males by highlighting the practical, insightful and creative ways to keep Black men involved in the life of the church. This is

a much needed resource for developing strong male ministries in the Black church and the Black community. The author offers insights and ministries to increase male participation in the African American church. Males are offered ministries which make their church membership positive and productive.

Another book of Jawanza Kunjufu is *Motivating and Preparing Black Youth for Success.* This work depicts the importance of values as the basis for the success of Black youth. Youth must be taught and mentored early if success is to become a reality. Education and learning must be emphasized and taught early to young people. Parents and adults must provide guidance and instruction to young people. Great insight is offered to youth, parents and the Black community.

In *Solutions for Black America*, rounding out this trilogy, Kunjufu says specific problems facing the African-American community must be identified and addressed. These include education, health, economics, racism, and others. The author offers hope and specific ways to meet concrete problems of Black America with positive solutions. African Americans still face problems related to race. These problems must be addressed and dealt with by teaching and real solutions.

The African American Christian Man: Reclaiming the Village, written by Eddie B. Lane is a book about the empowerment of the African American man. Lane emphasizes that the history of racism and stereotypes of the Black man must be taken seriously in understanding his plight. Lane declares that liberation is much to be the focus of the church. This work offered excellent insight for this project.

Cleophus J. LaRue in *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* stresses the importance of Black Preaching in the Black community. The

preached word is still at the center of Black worship. LaRue points out differences between Black and white preaching. The Black context, culture and style are key elements of differences. This work is great in insight and wisdom.

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya chronicles the evolution of the Black church from its inception as the invisible institution in their groundbreaking book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* provides the history, polity, and beliefs of major Black denominations. This work also offers insight and suggestions to make the Black church stronger. It offers strengths and weaknesses of the African American church and helpful ideas for the church to move towards the future.

The company of Preachers edited by Lischer, Richard presents a collection of sermons and essays from some of the greatest preachers throughout history. This collection illustrates what it means to be committed and faithful to the proclamation of the gospel. These sermons and essays are true to the text and to the context. The context must be viewed through the lens of the text.

Floyd Massey, Jr. and Samuel Berry McKinney in their book on *Church Administration in the Black Perspective* show how effective church administration can be done from the perspective of Black History and culture. Unique aspects of Black culture and beliefs cannot be ignored when doing church administration. Issues like racism, liberation, oppression, poverty, and Black world view must be taken seriously. This work was beneficial in understanding the uniqueness of ministry and administration in the black church. This work clearly reveals that the Black church must be pastored and led in light of Black cultural beliefs.

Mentoring 101 by John C. Maxwell, sees mentoring as sharing with others in such a way as to help them develop and be successful. The mentor grows and is blessed as he or she mentors others. Mentoring is about helping and encouraging others. The mentor serves as a leader in empowerment. The mentor grows and develops as he/she blesses others.

In *Black Church Life-Styles,* Emanuel L. McCall presents the distinctiveness of Black church life. These include worship, history, preaching, singing, and outreach. This book offers insights to understanding the Black church and Black culture. McCall in this book helps us have a deeper understanding and appreciation of Black Church lifestyles.

J. G. McCann writes about reaching Black men for Christ in the book, *How to R. E. A.C.H Black Men for Christ.* The focus is on the moral decline of Black men in America. The author emphasizes that there is hope in Christ and the Church. Through Christ and the Church, Black men can be liberated and empowered for spiritual life. This work shares insights for the spiritual empowerment of Black men.

Henry H. Mitchell's book, *Black Church Beginnings,* explains how African Americans sought to form an independent faith and church. He clearly connects African roots and the African American church. Mitchell presents unique elements of the African American church. This work is clear in showing that there are cultural differences between the African American church and the white church.

Henry Mitchell also writes a must have book for preachers entitled, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching.* In this book, Mitchell declares that the sermon grows out of the preacher's commitment and conviction. Celebration can occur over the text and that God can do in us what He has done in Jesus Christ. Emotion and celebration are a

part of preaching in the African American tradition. This work offers the possibility of joy in spite of the circumstances of life.

In the book, *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, Larry D. Murphy provides a survey of the broad diversity of African American religion. Outstanding contributors are represented by these readings. Black religion, history and culture are broadly covered and great insight is offered for scholarship. This work offers tremendous scholarship about Black culture.

Alan E. Nelson in *Leading Your Ministry,* speaks candidly about ministry being more than just mechanics. Nelson helps the church leader to see the importance of vision which promotes and supports change. People have to grow and change with the ministry. This book is helpful in a congregation's appreciation for change.

The Black Male Handbook by Kevin Powell deals with issues being faced by Black males. It seeks to help Black males be successful, survive and thrive in life. Powell offers a collection of self-help essays to enable Black males to handle the struggles of life. This is a positive work but offers little in respect to male ministries in the church.

David Ramey's book, *Empowering Leaders* offers great insight to the empowerment of leaders. Empowered leaders enhance the development of those being led. They are empowered through the leadership of the leader. A leader is concerned for and involved in improving the lives, works and the community is better.

The religious quest throughout African American history is traced by Albert J. Raboteau, in *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans.* According to Raboteau, every aspect of African American life and history has been influenced and shaped by religion. The influence of religion cannot be confined to African American

church life. This work is excellent in showing how every aspect of African American History has been influenced by religion.

Albert J. Raboteau is also the author of *Slave Religion.* In Slave Religion, Raboteau provides an examination of slaves' religious life. He relates African beliefs to the Invisible Institution. He explains how the slaves had a different understanding of God than whites. This work is important in appreciating unique elements of Black beliefs and culture.

In the book, *The Power of the Pew: A Call to Partnership*, Franklyn W. Richardson empowers the laity in the church. The church is stronger and more effective when all members recognize their gifts and act as disciples. Members have power and authority when they serve. This work is powerful in relating the scriptures to Black church life.

Deotis J. Roberts examines the work of Bonhoeffer and King in his book, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power.* Both Bonhoeffer and King stood against societal evils. They were firmly grounded in the faith, hope and truth of the church. These men were encouraged and empowered by the church. These men are examples of what is possible through the church.

Samuel K. Roberts writes *Born to Preach: Essays In Honor of the Ministry of Henry and Ella Mitchell.* This work examines preaching in the tradition of the African American church. The context and culture of the African American church determines both the style and content of African American preaching. This work presents a diversity of issues related to preaching in the African American context. Deeper understandings of

African American culture can be more clearly understood although this work was not cited.

The Motivated Life written by Shellie Sampson, Jr. is a motivational book which promotes attitudes and goals for success. The author's focus is on young African American males. Persons are encouraged to think and develop and make a positive life for themselves. This work emphasizes the need for African American males to be so motivated that they can live positive and successful lives. This work places great emphasis on positive attitudes that lead to positive results.

Sound the Trumpet Again is a work edited by Darryl D. Sims and is an outstanding collection of sermons to empower African American men. These sermons address many of the personal and social problems that African American men face and offer hope. This book is full of wisdom, inspiration, and power for men and Christians in general. Great preachers and thinkers share outstanding messages. This work was not cited. These messages offer insight to African American culture and to issues related to African American men. One can see the liberation theology throughout these sermons.

Gerald L. Sittser, the author of *Water from a Deep Well,* presents the lives, beliefs, struggles and threats of Christian disciples from the early church to modern missionaries. This work can empower a person's faith. Studying the commitments, struggles and lives of others can encourage and empower the life of one who studies. *Navigating the Deep River: Spirituality in African American Families* is written by Archie Smith Jr., and is a message of hope for the African American family. The author sees hope in the historical and cultural context of African Americans. There is a message

of courage and encouragement that springs forth from racism, oppression and crises. The hardships and oppression faced by African Americans are met with spiritual power.

Warren H. Stewart's book, *Interpreting God's Word in Black Preaching* emphasizes that the Bible must be viewed from the perspective of the hearers. The context of the leaders cannot be ignored. This work declares that God is at the center. The word of God challenges and supports the believer at the same time.

Merrill Tenney's book *Exploring New Testament Culture* shares insights about the New Testament world from social and cultural perspectives. The background information is important in appreciating and understanding what Jesus and the early church had to face. This work is an outstanding interpretation of the New Testament Scriptures.

Terry Thomas's *Becoming a Fruit-Bearing Disciple,* is a book of empowerment. The emphasis is on every Christian and church member to be serious about the faith. Mature, serious and committed Christians help churches to be spiritually stronger and more purposeful. This work was not cited. The chapter *Hanging with the Teacher* offers insight to how persons are empowered when they have leadership. Leadership leads to empowerment.

Terry Thomas is also the author of *Making It Through A Storm.* This work is a powerful help in coping with and overcoming the hard times of life. Storms will come to every life. This book provides and explains great principles to deal with and overcome storms. This work is valuable personally and offers insight for males to handle tough times.

Iyanla Vanzant, a woman theologian and scholar writes *The Spirit of a Man* as a concern and love for Black men. Insights are shared which can help Black men grow and develop. Any man who is serious about his spirituality, relationships, and strength will get practical self-help knowledge from this book. Deeper understandings are shared in regard to the unique elements of the culture of black men.

Warren W. Wiersbe writes an interesting book entitled *50 People Every Christian Should Know.* This book shares the faith, struggles, victories and life stories of outstanding Christians. This book helps us see our own spiritual lives. It offers encouragement. A weakness of this work is few African American are presented.

Gayraud S. Wilmore's work *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* provides great insight in this interpretation of African American history and religion. It is clearly shown that Black religion has had radical aspects about it in coping and surviving under racist and oppressive conditions. Many of the Black spirituals reveal an underlying radical religious consciousness. This work shatters the idea that Black religion is passive in accepting the status quo. Survival, hope and liberation are seen throughout this great work.

Edward P. Wimberly's book *Relational Refugees* teaches that persons need a sense of community. When people feel alienated, social problems are the result. People who have a strong sense of community and support are able to handle and deal with crisis' situations. When people feel accepted, loved and supported, they can handle and overcome difficult situations. Empowerment grows out of the community.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundations

The Bible reflects the faith of the Hebrews, the Old Testament and the faith of the Early Church—the New Testament. These communities of faith wrote the scriptures of the Bible according to their faiths and understandings of God. When an individual reads the Bible from belief and faith in God, he or she is not making any attempt to be objective. The person of faith is an insider. An insider does not read the scriptures as good literature or information. The scriptures are read and studied to understand God's truth, to know God, to know ourselves, to love each other and to live the truth of God as disciples. We also study the scriptures to be inspired, enlightened and empowered. The Bible is the word of God in that we believe that God has revealed God's self through humans for humans. Our faith provides us with identity, personhood and purpose for living. The truth of God speaks to all people for all times.

Old Testament

The two books of Samuel were originally one in the Hebrew Bible. Samuel, Saul, and David are the three major characters in the two books. The story of Samuel is found only in 1 Samuel. Saul's story is also found in 1 Samuel

with the report of his death at the beginning of 2 Samuel. David's story begins midway in 1 Samuel, continues through 2 Samuel, and is completed in the second chapter of 1 Kings.[1]

Stories about David describe how his early life had been filled with honor. He had a strong perception of the destiny for himself and Israel. David was a great warrior, politician, King, poet, musician and organizer. David was a deeply religious man; but David was a real man with real imperfections. However, he became Israel's greatest king and God's leader.[2] David's stories reveal his selection by God and Saul's rejection. David was God's king by God's assignment.

In 1 Samuel 22:1-5, David is the central personality in the text. This passage is set in the midst of the "Narrative of David's rise to kingship (1 Sm 16 - 2 Sm 1)".[3] David rose from the very bottom of society. He rose from the status of a *nobody* to being the greatest King and leader in Hebrew history. David's courage, creativity and survivorship are celebrated. It is clear in the narrative that David is God's man. Even though David does not appear to be any match for the gigantic Goliath or the mighty King Saul, David is smart, courageous, and a real warrior. With all of these attributes, he was God's leader.

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[1]Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzer, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: The Holy Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 330.

[2]George A. Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1980), 771-782.

[3]Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 213.

His destiny of leadership, empowerment and kingship was sure, certain and inevitable.[4] Saul was jealous and angry with David. He really wanted David dead and he plotted to have David killed. David's popularity with the people of Israel grew especially after he killed Goliath. But the more popular David became the more Saul's resentment and anger grew. The man destined to become God's leader and King was now a man on the run, a fugitive. One could argue that it took all of David's struggles to equip and lead him to the throne of Israel. But even in David's struggles, he had the trusted friendship of Saul's son, Jonathan. Through all of David's struggles, David's mission and destiny were embedded in God's plan.[5]

David, in fleeing for his life, escaped as an outlaw to the cave of Adullam. A cave, a place of retreat and safety, was the hiding place of David—the future king.[6] The kinsmen of David joined him in the cave. They joined with David in exile. It could be that David's kinsmen, once David was a criminal, would not be safe at home from Saul's anger and revenge.[7] In a real sense David's struggle became their struggle. But whatever their reasons, they were declaring that *We are Family!*

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[4]Ibid., 213.

[5]Joan Comy, *Who's Who in the Old Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 67-68.

[6]George A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume II* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1981), 1000.

[7]Ibid.

1 Samuel 22:2 (RSV) affirms that not only were David's kinsmen drawn to him, but others who were oppressed, distressed and disinherited.

> And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt and everyone who was discontented, gathered to him; and he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

David, himself, is oppressed, distressed and dispossessed. He is an underdog and an insignificant person from the wrong side of the tracks. David is threatening to King Saul's empire because he challenges the status quo. He challenges the powers that be. The people believe in David. David is a leader not just because he claims to be. He is a leader because the people declare that he is. They believe in David. The people were also saying that he is one of us. He believes in us and he will stand for us.

John Hayes emphasizes that David was God's man.

> I Samuel 16:1-13 tells of David's anointment by the prophet Samuel as the replacement for Saul while the latter was still alive and reigning. In the story, David is pictured as the eighth and youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. The older sons were bypassed by Yahweh and his choice fell on the shepherd lad… The emphasis of this story fall on David as the chosen of Yahweh, selected and designated at a young and innocent age, untarnished by political ambition.[8]

"A real socio-economic struggle can be seen in the Saul-David struggle…may not be merely a dispute between north and south but may also reflect tension between the haves and the have-nots. It may be that the Saul-David

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[8]John H. Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971), 105-106.

tension also represents a challenge of economically disadvantaged groups against the more stable landed populace (cf. 22:7; 2 Sm 9:9-13)."[9]

Brueggemann further states "What interests us here is the report that David became a powerful magnet, attracting all kinds of marginal people. There came to him all who were in distress, all who were in debt, all who were discontented with their life—David became their leader and rallying point."[10]

A major problem faced by the people of Israel is that their land was being taken away by creditors and government officials. There was not a system in place to assure that the powerless, the poor, criminals and those in debt would not be treated unjustly. King Saul was blamed for much of the unfairness.[11]

Sinclair presents clear differences between Saul and David. "...David became all that Saul was not. The shepherd boy grew to be the beloved hero of Israel. While Saul was vengeful, David was magnanimous. While Saul wreaked havoc David won hearts. It was with relief that Israel proclaimed him king after Saul's death."[12]

It is clear that David's leadership is recognized and embraced when the oppressed and distressed of Israel's society seek to join David in his exile, in his

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[9]Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel—Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 157.*

[10]Ibid., 156.

[11]David J. Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 256.

[12]Celia Brewer Sinclair, *A Guide Through the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 75.

outlaw situation. "He lives in the wilderness, dodging the pursuit of Saul and living by his courage and daring. He gathers a band of men who themselves are refugees from legal society, the impoverished, the marginal, the outlawed."[13]

David's army began with four hundred men described as "Disgruntled younger sons, debtors, men in flight from authority, men seeking new careers, excitement and perhaps even violence, under the charismatic national hero-in-exile."[14] David's army grew to six hundred men, "Who remained loyal to him throughout his life."[15]

The distress discontented and impoverished people embraced David as their leader. Surely, they saw courage, creativity and leadership ability in David. The writer contends that they also saw his situation of suffering, pain, hurt, struggle and oppression. These oppressed people knew that David understood their oppression, brokenness and their lack of respect as individuals in an insensitive culture. David helped to provide for them what the broader culture had denied them—identity, dignity and empowerment.

In a real sense, David provided for these dispossessed, discontented persons what God had provided for Israel. God took on the identity of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt and was partial toward the slaves. God was not neutral. God was on the side of the slaves. God had a special concern for the exploited, the

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[13]Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 214.

[14]Madeline Miller, *Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life* (Edison: Castle Books, 1996), 282.

[15]Ibid., 283.

wounded, the hurt and God set the slaves free to be God's own children and to be themselves. These malcontented people knew David understood and they believed that he cared. David was their leader, savior and warrior.[16]

Birch emphasizes that "David, as an eighth son of a rather undistinguished family, may be seen as the hero and champion of socially and economically marginal groups over against wealthier landholders."[17]

David was a survivor. But he was not a survivor for himself alone. He was a leader of people and a servant of God. While David was a survivor, he was not brutal and vicious. He was a man of integrity, values and purpose. Even the group of men that surrounded David was described as *renegades.*[18] He had enough influence over them that they could be kept under control. A person's identity is not based on what the society says, but rather what the person accepts. A renegade lives out renegade status only when he or she accepts the renegade identity.

This Davidic Story reveals that persons are always more than society's label or definition. David, an outcast understood others who were outcasts. David was a leader by living into the suffering, oppression and discontent of those he was to lead. To lead without understanding the plight of those being led is either arrogance or ignorance, or both.

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[16]Ibid., 121.

[17]Bruce Birch, *The New Interpreter's Bible—First and Second Samuel, Vol. II* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 1144.

[18]*The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 35.

David's rise to kingship had to go through a cave, a hideout, an exile, an outlaw's refuge. David could not go to the King's Palace without going through the lowest ebb of life. David's rise to the height of Hebrew society had to go by way of those who were oppressed, dispossessed, in debt, distressed, outlaws and outcasts. David was a blessing to the *lowest of the low*. In turn, David's life and destiny was blessed by those he was a blessing to. The blessings, encouragement, presence and friendship were all mutual. David was blessed. The outcasts were blessed. Every kingly destiny and every great success are all enriched, enabled and empowered by every struggle, every cave and every individual—even those declared to be nobodies.

One cannot ignore that "…David's accomplishments were impressive. The confidence he often engendered in his followers, his rigorous suppression of Philistine power and his establishment of Jerusalem as the new capital speaks well in his behalf."[19] David was a leader of people. It is clear that people were drawn to David as a powerful person but even more as a charismatic leader. They believed in him because they saw in him real hope and a real future. "The choice of David, the runt and the shepherd, to be the anointed, to be a sign and representative of God's working presence in human life and history, is surely intended to convey a sense of inclusion to all ordinary men and women, the plain

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[19]William H. Gentz, General Editor, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986), 250.

folk, the undistinguished in the eyes of their neighbors, those lacking social status and peer recognition."[20]

What happened to these men? These men remained committed and loyal to David. The men who were without status and power were drawn to David and were empowered. 1 Samuel 27 reveals how David "hires out his band of men to the Philistines as mercenaries..."[21] This was a strategic move on the part of David to escape the threat of King Saul. These men found support, acceptance and empowerment. These men in turn were willing to do whatever was necessary to care for, fight for and stand for David. David's empowerment of men who had been outlaws, outcasts, oppressed and dispossessed were now loyal to David as an outlaw, and throughout his kingship.

David attracted the outcasts and troubled to himself because they saw in him hope, new possibilities and new lives. These outcasts were willing to follow the leadership of David because they believed that he understood their painful situation, was willing to help them and that he believed in and accepted them. These outcasts could trust David because he trusted them. Strong leaders embody the attitudes and principles that they desire from those being led. Dr. Terry Thomas, in *Becoming A Fruit-Bearing Disciple* emphasize that "relationships are built by hanging around and spending committed time with the person or persons with whom you desire to have a relationship. Emulation in some form or fashion

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[20]Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over A Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1997), 17.

[21]Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down,* 214.

is a certainty in a relationship. It is a known fact that if you hang around a person long enough you will find yourself unknowingly mimicking that person's behavior. Without thought or practice, our behavior begins to reflect the person or persons with whom we constantly share our time."[22] These outcasts hung with David as their leader and teacher. They found in David trust, acceptance and hope.

The story of David and these outcasts sheds light on African-American males and their participation in the church. These men were drawn to David because they felt accepted, loved, wanted and trusted. The loyalty of this outcast group of men never wavered. David's leadership was accepted and followed because he saw and brought out the best in this oppressed and outcast group of men. African-American males' dedication and loyalty to the church grow out of being believed in, trusted and wanted.

New Testament

The Book of Acts has great historical significance in the New Testament. "The Book of Acts begins precisely at the point where the Gospel of Luke leaves off, with the ascension of Jesus. The author then describes the history of Christianity in general conformity with the geographical outline given in Acts 1:8. According to this verse, the Christian movement begins in Jerusalem, then spreads into Judea and Samaria and finally extends to the end of the earth. Thus

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[22]Terry Thomas, *Becoming A Fruit-Bearing Disciple (Raleigh, NC: Voice of Rehoboth, 2005), 78.*

Luke begins his narrative by describing the situation of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4 – 8:3). In 8:4-12:25, the movement begins to spread into other parts of Judea and Samaria. Then, in 13:1-21:16, the author concentrates almost exclusively on Paul, whose missionary activity takes him to Asia Minor and Greece."[23] The church was a body of believers. In the New Testament ecclesia signifies a group of believers in Jesus who are called together and is translated as *church.*[24]

The Book of Acts places great emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. The church and the Apostles are empowered, encouraged and inspired by the Holy Spirit. "Through later scribes gave the book the title '*Acts of the Apostles'*, a better one might be '*Acts of the Spirit'*. In Luke's eyes, it is the Spirit of God who directs the disciples in Jesus' work of bringing God's rule into the hearts of men and women. Not only does the Holy Spirit bring the presence of Jesus to his followers, but also, through signs and wonders and preaching, shows unbelievers the power of the gospel to change people's lives."[25]

Barnabas is the New Testament character for this project. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36 (NRSV)).

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[23]Paul J. Achtemeier, General Editor, *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1996), 11.

[24]Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102.

[25]George Carey, *The Bible for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 215.

William Gentz describes Barnabas as "An early Christian leader in both the Jerusalem church and Paul's missionary party. This man, otherwise called Joseph (Acts 4:36), was given the descriptive name Barnabas, literally 'Son of Encouragement' possibly in view of his speaking ability, though the exact derivation of Barnabas is uncertain."[26] It is clear that Barnabas was indeed special to the church and the Apostles. "As to his character Luke is unstinting in his praise of Barnabas, commencing with the designation a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith(Acts 11:24)".[27]

Acts 4 reveals a poor and needed church in Jerusalem. "The poverty of the primitive Jerusalem community is recorded elsewhere, and gestures for its relief like that of Joseph—Barnabas would have made a lasting impression on the tradition."[28] John Drane makes a sharp distinction between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira. "When Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the church, Peter had no doubt that this was a direct challenge not to himself but to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:9). For the Church did not belong to the Apostles; it had come into being with the arrival of the spirit and the ultimate responsibility of its members was to God."[29] Barnabas on the other hand in Acts 4:37 sold a field that belonged to him

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[26]William H. Gentz, General Editor, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986), 107.

[27]Ibid., 108.

[28]Raymond Brown, Ed, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Volume II* (Englewood Cliffs, CA: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 180.

[29]John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 393.

and gave the money to the Apostles. This act of kindness revealed his loyalty to the church and to God. It also could have helped to motivate and inspire other members of the church to do likewise.

Joseph Fitzmyer says that the story of Ananias and Sapphira is, "The main incident in Acts that raises questions about the historical value of the Lucan Narrative as a whole."[30] This writer holds that there are numerous sensational or unusual stories throughout the Bible. Sometimes, sensational stories help to make key points of truth. This point is made by Freedman, "… in vivid contrast to Ananias and Sapphira, who withheld a portion of their prosperity (Acts 5:1-11). Barnabas is shown to typify the spirit of communal sharing which Luke emphasizes in the earliest Jerusalem community."[31]

The church emphasizes a kind of communal living. "Holding 'everything' in 'common' (Acts 2:43-45, 4:32-35), the Jerusalem community meets Jesus challenge to sacrifice material possessions to attain true discipleship (Luke 18:18-30)."[32] According to this standard Barnabas attained true discipleship and was worthy of his new name, Barnabas- *Son of Encouragement.*

"Typically names change with vocational changes and indicate God's favor, as does Barnabas obedience to the rule of this community of goods. The

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[30]Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles, AB31* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 317.

[31]David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 610.

[32]Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 227.*

apostles changed Joseph's name underscores once again their religious authority."[33]

Barnabas exemplifies encouragement. Encouragement is a ministry that every church must take seriously. Every church member is called upon to develop and live out the gift of encouragement. "Barnabas is described in Acts as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, as a result of whose devotion and encouragement—a large company was added to the Lord."[34] Barnabas is in the New Testament record and is an example for believers because of his encouragement. He is an unsung hero. Barnabas does not stand in the spotlight; however, he is crucial to the growth of the Early Church. Real encouragement promotes spiritual, individual and church growth. "In a ministry of encouragement, we will stand by others, guide and counsel them, urge, comfort, motivate, strengthen, inspire and console."[35] Barnabas truly lives up to the meaning of his name *Son of Encouragement*. Peter and Paul are more visible and more recognizable in the Book of Acts than anybody else. Barnabas does his ministry and makes his contribution to the church and servants of God as an encourager. The powerful preacher, Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, described Barnabas as an *Enabler of Preachers* (A sermon heard by Dr. Taylor.)[36]

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[33]*The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume X* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 97.

[34]Ronald Browning, *Who's Who in The New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 17.

[35]Paul Moots, *Becoming Barnabas: The Ministry of Encouragement* (Herndon, MD: The Alban Institute 2004), 1.

[36]Gardner C. Taylor, (A sermon heard by Taylor).

Acts 15:37-39 describes a serious disagreement between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark. At an earlier time, John Mark had participated with Paul and Barnabas on a mission to Cyprus. He then continued as they landed in Pamphylia. For some unknown reason, John Mark went back to Jerusalem. He deserted Paul and Barnabas. It is not clear whether John Mark had a loss of nerve or whether he had to take care of a family matter. The author of Acts does not provide any details in regard to the desertion.

Paul was not willing to forget or forgive John Mark for his departure. Paul refused to take John Mark on missions of ministry. Barnabas was willing to give John Mark another chance. Paul would not give in. This was a serious disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas and Paul parted company. Barnabas, son of encouragement, gave John Mark another chance. It was a wise decision by Barnabas because John Mark was faithful and effective. Once again, Barnabas had lived up to his name as a Son of Encouragement. Later, Barnabas and Paul were reunited in ministry and fellowship. Reconciliation was possible because Barnabas did not take the disagreement between Paul and himself personally. (It almost appears that Paul failed to remember that he had been given a second chance after his conversion to accept Christ when the church did not want to accept him.)[37] Paul may have thought John Mark was unworthy to continue in ministry. John Mark got a second chance and was able to redeem

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[37]Moots, *Becoming Barnabas: The Ministry of Encouragement,* 79.

himself because of the friendship and encouragement of Barnabas. He was able to re-gain self respect, self esteem and a positive identity as a witness for Christ.[38]

Paul had been unforgiving towards John Mark. Paul was finished with John Mark. The blessing for John Mark was that Barnabas believed in him and trusted him. The interesting point is that in 2 Timothy 4:9-11, "Demas in love with this present world…" had deserted Paul. It appears that Demas lost focus or faith. He was no longer faithful to Paul and the Christian cause. 2 Timothy 4:11 reveals that Paul has had a change of heart towards John Mark: "Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me." John Mark got a second chance with Paul because Barnabas gave him a second chance. Paul sent for John Mark out of a real necessity of being left alone by Demas. Barnabas gave John Mark a second chance because he refused to let John Mark's friendship and fellowship die. The encouragement, acceptance, being needed and loved by Barnabas and Paul led to John Mark's empowerment.

The reunion of John Mark with Paul was an unintended result or consequence of Barnabas' trust, acceptance and forgiveness of John Mark. Barnabas remained true to God and to himself as an outstanding person of encouragement. Barnabas was authentic in being himself. His motives toward John Mark were caring, concerned and consistent. Barnabas' blessing of acceptance and trust in John Mark helped lead to being reunited with Paul. It was Paul who told Barnabas to bring John Mark because he was useful.

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[38]Brown, et., al. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 196.

Acts 11:25-26 describes Barnabas as Saul's supporting partner, his sponsor. He found Saul and brought him to Antioch. They stayed together and worked together for a year. Barnabas encouraged Saul in partnership. He was not controlling or dominating. Barnabas and Saul were partners in Ministry.

It is clear in Acts that later Saul was more out front in the church's ministry than was Barnabas. Barnabas encouraged Saul by standing aside. In order to stand aside, Barnabas had to believe in Saul. He had to trust him. Believers were first called *Christians* in Antioch. It was a negative term. Believers embraced the name and made it a positive identity.[39]

Acts 9:26-27 explains how Barnabas took responsibility for Saul. Saul, before his Damascus Road experience, had persecuted the church. He had been a devout Jew. But after his Damascus Road experience, Saul tried to join Jesus' disciples. The disciples were afraid of Saul. They did not trust him. They could not believe Saul had really taken on a new identity in Jesus Christ. It was Barnabas who took charge of Saul. Barnabas shared Saul's story of conversion. When everybody else was staying away from Saul, Barnabas stood beside him and with him. Others were suspicious of Saul. Barnabas believed Saul was genuine. He did not hold Saul's past against him. Barnabas believed that through Jesus Christ, God had given Saul a new beginning. Saul's outsider and outcast status did not stop Barnabas from treating Saul as a brother, friend, disciple and

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[39]Ibid., 190.

believer. Saul was accepted by the church and disciples because Barnabas believed in Saul.[40]

Acts 14:19-20 describes how the ministry of Paul and Barnabas caused them to face persecution and suffering. Paul was attacked and stoned by Jews. It appears that the good news of the gospel was attractive, appealing and winsome to the people. Jews were angry and threatened. Paul's faith got him into trouble. Barnabas was Paul's partner before the stoning and when the stoning was over Barnabas was still Paul's partner in the ministry. Surely, Barnabas like Paul had his fears. But Barnabas' faith gave him the courage to stand against fear and to stand as a ministry partner with Paul. Barnabas encouraged Paul amidst fear, persecution and suffering. He encouraged Paul by standing with Paul in spite of fear. His partnership of faith was bigger and more powerful than opposition and fear.[41] Barnabas and Paul were successful together.

Acts 4:36-37 and Acts 11:23-24 reveal "Barnabas' commitment and loyalty to God. Barnabas called upon others to be faithful and at the same time, he was faithful himself. Barnabas sold his possessions and gave the proceeds to the Apostles to be used in the ministry of the gospel. Barnabas lived what he taught. Ministry was not just some strategic plan. Ministry for Barnabas grew out of his character and call. God's spirit filled his life, inspired his work and gave direction to his ministry. People were won over to the Lord because they were encouraged

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[40]Ibid., 187.

[41]Ibid., 194.

through the presence and power of God in Barnabas' life. Barnabas was who he was. His encouragement was like an overflow of the joy and presence within.

Barnabas identity was to live up to his call. His Spirit of Encouragement could not be deterred or defeated. It is clear that Paul could never have become the preacher or church founder without the encouragement and fellowship of Barnabas. Perhaps, without Barnabas, Paul may have quit and given up on the faith. Only God can fully know the impact of Barnabas on Paul and the church.

Every person needs the encouragement of a Barnabas. Every believer ought to be an encourager like Barnabas. Barnabas was consistent. He encouraged Saul when the church did not trust him after his conversion on the Damascus Road. He encouraged John Mark when Paul did not believe in him after he had deserted them. Barnabas encouraged Paul when he was a bold witness for Christ. He encouraged Paul when he was persecuted for his witness. Barnabas never wavered or backed down.

This writer holds that Joseph's name was changed to Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, because of what the Apostles saw in him and who he became. Barnabas was loyal to the church in giving his resources. He believed in the church and the God of the church. His attitude and actions were noticed by the church and motivated members of the church in their giving and stewardship. The apostles, like many sincere disciples, are able to see gifts, talents and strengths in Barnabas perhaps before he could see these attributes in himself. A new identity is implicit in the name, Barnabas, Son of Encouragement.

Empowerment for African-American males becomes a reality when they are encouraged, loved, supported and believed in. Barnabas' story of encouragement towards others exemplifies how the faith, witness and the lives of others can be empowered. His testimony of encouragement should be the testimony of every Christian and the church as a body. Encouragement promotes empowerment and empowerment promotes sincere faith and selfless ministry in the spirit of Jesus Christ. African-American males are empowered, transformed and effective in ministry when they are encouraged.

Theological Foundation

The researcher used liberation theology and process theology to explain the faith of the African American church and the increased participation of males in this project. James H. Cone declared that "Christian theology is a theology of liberation".[42] Liberation Theology is concerned with the freedom and dignity of those who are oppressed. Cone argues that Blacks have historically been the oppressed in America. He further argues that blacks need freedom from white oppressors.[43] The concern here is not about racial hatred but freedom from oppression. Liberation theology emphasizes that God is on the side of freedom and not oppression. Blackness in James H. Cone's thought is not just a racial issue but the object of oppression. "Black theology is a theology of liberation because it

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[42]James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 1.

[43]Ibid., 5.

is a theology which arises from identification with the oppressed blacks of America seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light of the Black condition. It believes that the liberation of the Black community is God's liberation."[44] The freedom sought for by Blacks is a freedom from oppression and a freedom to be themselves. This freedom is God given. Providing ministry opportunities and encouragement for African American males in church life is liberating. Opportunity and encouragement can promote empowerment. Process theology helps to explain this empowerment. "Process theologians influenced by the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead and C. Hartshorne proposed a new doctrine of God that stressed the divine immanence, the divine involvement in the world process, the divine responsiveness, and the divine love as persuasive rather than coercive. In this way, they showed God's immediacy and presence in every moment, and God's effect on the moment."[45] African-American males are empowered for ministry when they are loved, supported, encouraged and believed in and provided with opportunities for ministry. "The process theologians see God as active in all events as one efficient cause among many others. According to the process view, God acts in the world by influence and persuasion."[46] God uses all of our experiences, good and bad, to bring to reality our best selves. It takes all that we have gone through to get where we are.

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[44]Ibid., 5.

[45]Thomas C. Owen and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing: New York, 2002, 89.

[46]Ibid., 128.

Robert McAfee Brown in *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide,* articulates three emphases of liberation theology which cannot be separated. "The first emphasis is liberation from unjust social structures that destroy people. The structures may be political or economic or cultural; they may grow out of warped attitudes based on race, class, nation, sex or religious structures. The second emphasis is liberation from the power of fate, from the sense that one's station in life is foreordained. The third emphasis is liberation from personal sin and guilt."[47] All three of these emphases are a part of and essential to liberation theology. The focus of the project is more on the first emphasis of liberation from unjust social structures but the other two emphases are not excluded.

James H. Cone's *Black Theology* is grounded in the Exodus Event of the Hebrew Bible and Jesus of the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, Jews were in bondage, oppressed and the unknown of the ancient world. The message was that God took their side—the side of the oppressed, the slaves and the unknown. God moved in their history. God moved in their lives and set them free from human bondage. God did not side with the oppressors but with the oppressed. God is a God of liberation for the oppressed of this world (Exodus 19:4-5).[48]

The idea of liberation is emphasized in the New Testament by Jesus Christ. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus clearly sounded the note of liberation for oppressed

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[47]Robert McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide.* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1993, 61-63.

[48]James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 2.

persons. His emphasis was not just a spiritual liberation but also included liberation from physical oppression.[49]

The God of the Hebrews and the God of Jesus was and is a liberating God who is active in the world to set the enslaved and captives free. God takes upon God's self the condition of oppression. The human situation of physical and spiritual bondage became God's plight with God's people. "The search for Black identity is the search for God, because God's identity is revealed in the black struggle for freedom."[50] Human freedom and identity belong together. Persons of faith are free inwardly and sincerely committed to God. Freedom is the inevitable yearning.

"Men belong to God, and no man who is in bondage to another is free to answer God if he must first answer to some other man claiming to be his master."[51] Freedom is essential for human dignity. A person is defined by his or her commitments; but, without freedom, commitments are shallow or cannot be realized.

C. Eric Lincoln implied that the reality of Black theology did not begin with James H. Cone. "Black theology began with the first sermon preached by a black slave to his brothers and sisters huddled together in some plantation swamp or forest. … it was even then a theology of liberation because it questioned the

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[49]Ibid., 3.

[50]Ibid., 15.

[51]Eric C. Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 147.

established contention that God willed the desecration of the human spirit by reducing a man to a thing."[52] Black theology helped to shape an identity of positiveness and empowerment for African Americans throughout their history in America. When the broader society labeled blackness as ugly, Black theology declared that blackness was beautiful because God is the creator.

Black theology takes the suffering of the oppressed seriously. Suffering is embraced with the hope of liberation. In the spirit of Black theology, the African American Church has been prophetic in calling the status quo into question. The African American church offers understanding to the struggles of the African American male and the hopeful message of empowerment. The positive message of liberating, hope empowers, encourages and enables males to be positive and productive members of the African American church community. Black theology affirms "to know God is to know God's work of liberation in behalf of the oppressed."[53]

Knowledge of God is reflected in one's life and activities inspired by God. A person's love and knowledge of God provides identity and influences behavior. Faith in God is bigger than the struggles and difficulties faced. The African American Church is the custodian of hope for African Americans. African American males are empowered by Black theology through the African American church. The church provides for these males, empowerment and purpose often denied by the broader culture. In *Soul Theology,* religion and belief systems are

[52]Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier*, 147.

[53]Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 48.

acknowledged for having great importance. "Among oppressed people and all others under major stress, belief systems give healing and empowering support to psychic and spiritual survival. The belief system of Black culture has been doing just this task."[54] African Americans in general and African American males in particular owe their survival and positiveness to their faith and/or the church. The invitation and opportunity to share in the ministry of the church says to African American males that they are needed, loved and appreciated.

The church is not a building. The church is the people of God. When the church is reduced to just being a building, the church loses its mission, focus and purpose. The church is a community of faith in Jesus Christ. The faith of these believers has a purpose in Jesus, the Christ. The mission of this community of believers is to live out being Christ's agents in setting persons free from sin, oppression and physical bondage. The church is spirit-filled, spirit-empowered and spirit-led. The church is not a selfish community. The church is God's community. For African Americans the church cannot neglect being the liberating agent. J. Deotis Roberts emphasizes the idea of family for the African American church. "The black church, as a social and religious body, has served as a kind of 'extended family' for blacks. In a real sense, then, thousands of blacks who have never known real family life have discovered the meaning of real kinship in the black church."[55] Historically, family life was either denied or limited severely for

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[54]Nicholas C. Cooper-Lewter, and Henry H. Mitchell, *Soul Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), xi.

[55]Deotis J. Roberts, ed. David Emmanuel Goatley, *Black Religion, Black Theology: The Collected Essays of J. Deotis Roberts* (Harrisbury, Trinity Press International, 03), 78.

African Americans. Family is the social unit where a person is loved, respected, appreciated, valued, recognized, and supported. The African American church is the family. It provided all of the missing family elements. Church is about relationships, fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood and sisterhood. Church relationships are often stronger than biological relationships because church relationships are undergirded by a common faith along with deep friendship with each other.

E. Franklin Frazier in *The Negro Church in America* describes the loss of family life.

> The enslavement of the Negro not only destroyed the traditional African system of kinship and other forms of organized social life but it made insecure and precarious the most elementary form of social life which tended to sprout anew, so to speak, on American soil—the family. There was, or course, no legal marriage and the relation of the husband and father to his wife and children was a temporary relationship dependent upon the will of the white masters and the exigencies of the plantation regime."[56]

The African American church was forced to form a system of kinship and family to fill the void of a lack of family life. These family relationships were and are essential to a person's well-being. The church for African Americans had to and continues to attend to family support systems and issues that the white church never had to focus upon. For African Americans, the church was not just a home away from home. The church was and is home. It provides warmth, love, support and real kinship. The African American church lives into the idea that *God is a*

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[56]E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 13.

mother for the motherless and a father for the fatherless. The church literally lives into the reality that it will provide real kinship even when that kinship has been denied or loss. The church seeks to be a real family of faith and kinship. Human beings belong to God. God will use the church or other means to meet the needs of God's people. Black Theology declares that God is interested in the liberation of people held in bondage. African American males need a sense of kinship and family in a society where they are viewed negatively and are stereotyped as lazy, worthless, irresponsible, and the very scum of America. The church declares to African American males that they do count and that they are members of a family that cares for them. They are encouraged to be all they can be in the *Body of Christ.* The identity of African American males is appreciated above and beyond the negative stereotypes. It is liberating to be appreciated and acknowledged as a person of sacred worth when the broader society has sentenced African American males to a destiny of *insignificant person status*. To be able to say *we are family* is to say *I am important*. I am more than what others say or will. I am God's child. Everybody is unique, special and blessed in the family of God.

J. Deotis Roberts recognizes the importance of the significance of the church being a family. "The church as a good family is a fellowship in which every member is *somebody*. It has always been a place where blacks who have been *nobodies* through the week have affirmed their dignity as persons. Among members of the body of Christ there is to be togetherness, belongingness, but the

dignity of selfhood is to be respected and cultivated."[57] Roberts further points out that out of this climate of love and appreciation, leaders are developed. Along with leaders produced, persons who have done extremely well in secular vocations have been nurtured and supported by the black church.[58] The African American church has been the community of faith, the family of hope and the inspirer of dreams for a people who have been denied or robbed of positive identity. The African American church exemplifies the idea that people become what they are taught, dream and are committed to. The blessedness and success of the African American church cannot be limited to the institutional aspects of the church. A more realistic assessment of the importance of the church has to be seen in what happens in the lives of African Americans.

African Americans have been inspired by the Christian faith as the church has provided an outlet where their faith can be lived and shared. "Existentially, this black Christian outlook informed how African Americans understood themselves, others and the world around them. The personal experiences of conversion enabled otherwise degraded individuals to see themselves as worthwhile and precious in God's sight. This sense of self-worth was fortified by the religious rhetoric's used in the construction of a communal identity. African Americans, through biblical analogy, came to see themselves as the children of God, linking as it were the freedom of the Israelites with their own eventual

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[57]Roberts, *Black Religion, Black Theology,* 81.

[58]Ibid., 81.

liberation."[59] Conversion was personal and communal for African Americans. It was individual and shared experiences. Self-worth had deeper and more intense meaning in a community of love, support, kinship and encouragement. Self-worth in and of itself is liberation when viewed against the background of slavery, racism, insult and degradation.

"The 'Black Church' (whether the invisible institution of the south or the black churches and denomination of the North) was the principle site of public engagement for African Americans. Here Black individuals could participate directly in deliberation about their circumstances with public humiliation from white Americans. The church also housed numerous activities from schools to social functions."[60] The African American church was the only institution and place where African Americans were free enough to discuss and share their real feelings about their own situation and their yearning for freedom. The church was the only place where African Americans could be who they really were and call into question racial inconsistencies and the white status quo. Black liberation theology could take place in the freedom provided within the African American church. The church had to take seriously the suffering and oppression of African Americans. Black liberation theology declares that suffering and oppression cannot be neglected or ignored. Dwight N. Hopkins makes a key point in regard to the inner aspect of Black theology. "… a liberation movement needs to free

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[59]Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), xxi.

[60]Ibid., xxii.

black minds from self-hate and subordination to white power."[61] The church is essential in helping to set African Americans free internally empowering them to be positive in external actions.

Black liberation theology is centered in God's desire for human freedom. "God becomes everything that the people need in order to sustain their lives with dignity. He is the One that the people can tell all about their troubles."[62] Every aspect of a person or people's relationship with God is liberating because God is a God of liberation. People cannot worship, pray; sing or fellowship with God without being involved and set free by God's liberating activity in the world.

Liberation theology is positive for the oppressed and the oppressors. "This struggle for 'full humanity' both demonstrate and restores human dignity, not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressor, whose humanity is diminished by participation in and collusion with domination."[63] God's liberation makes the lives of all of God's children more God-like and suitable to live in community.

J. Deotis Roberts wrote in *The Prophethood of Black Believers* that "It is time for all black people to become concerned and get involved. We must seek to preserve our communal life. Rugged individualism is not a luxury we can afford. Thus, the 'haves' must reach out to the 'have-nots'....We need to close the ranks and seek what we can do to lift the underclass from self-destruction and total ruin.

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[61]Dwight Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books 2008), 5.

[62]James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 132.

[63]Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 134.

We must not have our success at their expense."[64] The church has the responsibility to call into question selfish individualism and the destructive division that it leads to. Unity among the faithful of the church should not be sacrificed to satisfy egotistical desires which will leave us lonely and alone. African American church members are responsible to bless and be a blessing to those in need. "Black churches cannot afford to be 'class' churches. The spirit of the early church of Acts should be manifest in our midst. Black churches need to be sharing and caring fellowships."[65] The African American church must continue to be an agent of liberation in service to the God of Liberation.

"Often the first step toward liberation is psychological. Psychological liberation is a precondition for political freedom".[66] People must believe in themselves. They must not believe that they are more or less than anybody else. They must appreciate their own self-worth. No one can do that for them. African Americans must see beauty in blackness. It is self-hatred not to have self-worth. Any person who has little or no self worth has serious psychological problems. The African American church in the spirit of Black theology must declare that *black is beautiful*. One can have a healthy self pride which is not destructive or belittling to others. Persons need to be taught that every person is important to God. Every individual needs to be encouraged, loved, accepted and empowered in

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[64]J. Deotis Roberts, *The Prophpethood of Black Believers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1994), 23.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid., 72.

community. If a person does not have psychological liberation, physical liberation will never be very meaningful or purposeful. Psychological liberation and health determines our thoughts, attitudes, commitments, and actions.

"Black theology is at its best as church theology. It is a theology for ministry."[67] Real suffering, pain, racism, unemployment and discrimination are real issues that Black theology does not hide from. These issues are faced head-on and the message is that God's yearning for every human being is liberation from bondage of physical oppression and sin. The African American church has to take issues of oppression confronting its members and people in general seriously. The church has to take God's side in affirming human dignity and worth; and in opposing oppressive evils. Affirming the truth and love of God for every person is an on-going battle and war. The struggle for liberation was not just an African American slave issue. The struggle for liberation is an issue for every person facing oppression and it is an issue for every oppressor enslaved to systems and desires that deny worth and dignity to others.

The authors of the *African American Church Management Handbook* make an interesting point that "In general, the priority issues of black churches differ from the issues that are of importance in the white church context. The African American church has focused on issues related to civil rights, poverty, and justice. Organizations representing the so-called Christian Right (which is predominately white) have focused largely on issues such as abortion, gay

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[67]Ibid., 138.

marriage, and prayer in schools."[68] In a church management handbook for African American churches, the authors are saying that the most relevant issues for the African American church are not the same as the white church. The issues that stand out the most for African American churches are Black Liberation theology issues. These issues affect and have impact on how African American churches do ministry and relate to what black church members are facing on a daily basis. If the real issues facing African Americans were not dealt with, the church would be viewed as out of touch and it would soon die.

"Many white pastors do not understand why the Black church does not speak out more forcefully on 'their' issues, many of which are related to personal holiness and righteousness. They do not realize that in the black church an inordinate number of boys are in jail, too many girls are producing babies out of wedlock, and too many children are not getting a proper education in the school system. Issues of ethics, righteousness and personal holiness are important to black pastors and they do preach about them, but these issues do not over shadow the issues that affect people who still, to varying degrees, are experiencing oppression or it's after effects."[69] The African American church has to relate to its community and members according to their historical context, cultural context, racial context, and the real issues being faced. African Americans must be

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[68]Floyd H. Flake, Elaine McCollins Flake, and Edwin Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 3.

[69]Ibid., 3-4.

understood and appreciated out of their own situations of suffering, oppression and beliefs if they are going to be reached, helped and blessed.

Process theology offers insight and an approach to facilitate and increase male participation in the African American church. Process theology depicts reality as becoming "spiritual life on the human level involves growth and fundamental change."[70] Growth, development and maturing are the results of becoming. All persons, for better or worse, are becoming as long as they live. Religiously, God acts—humans react. Every action by God and reaction by humans promote the process of transformation and change. John Cobb defines "Christ as the image of a process of creative transformation of our imagination and life orientation."[71] All that we do or think is part of the on-going process.

Liberation theology and process theology work together in promoting our best selves. Liberation theology emphasizes freedom from all that hinders us from being all we can be for God's Kingdom. Process theology emphasizes the idea that in becoming our best selves, all that we do, think and experience are involved in the process. "Our liberation and transformation are the basis of our fulfillment".[72] Men have a sense of belonging when they are accepted, needed, wanted, trusted and believed in. Men grow, develop and are responsible when they are given meaningful and simple tasks of ministry. The meaningful tasks of

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[70]Ibid., 93.

[71]Owen Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 174.

[72]Ibid., 196.

ministry lead to increased male participation and empowerment. Faith and commitment grow deeper when males feel wanted, accepted and loved. A stronger faith and acceptance enhances a sense of ownership which leads to males being more responsible and taking more initiative in the church's ministry.

Historical Foundations

The emphasis of this project is to explain why there has been a significant increase in male participation in the Friendship Baptist Church, an African American church. The researcher's historical foundation paper will look at the history of the African American Church and factors which promote an increase in male participation. African American males must be examined within the African American church context. The researcher holds that male participation will increase when males are given meaningful responsibilities. African American males understanding of meaningful responsibilities, accomplishments and achievements are intricately connected to their culture and history. "We have to get our stories right from the very beginning. Part of any discussion of race has to do with how we tell the story".[73]

Racial identity cannot be ignored or denied. African-Americans cannot be neutral in regard to race. Cornel West makes this point very clear in *Hope on a Tight Rope.* "To live for 244 years with no legal standing, no social status, no public worth, with only economic value means that the issue of self-identity

[73]Cornell West, *Hope On A Tightrope: Words and Wisdom* (Smiley Books, 2008), 43

alongside truth and justice remains central. That's why race still matters." [74] The quest for identity is the quest for empowerment. It is about human dignity, self-worth and self-actualization. Undergirding the quest for identity is human freedom and hope for brighter days.

Michael Battle places the identity quest by African-Americans as the responsibility of African Americans.

> By virtue of participating in a community that has survived slavery, African Americans are constantly reshaping Black identity. One of the methods of American slavery was to strip black people of human identity; terms like "chattel" and "property" were constantly used to identify African Americans. Among African American communities, however, counter-methods were used to maintain human identify. They were such that personal and communal identities interact with each other and define each other. These are important interactions developed by persons who know that without community there is no survival. Yet a person's identity is constituted by relationships with other people in the community. This is why the Black church looks so different from other ways of practicing the church.[75]

The history and religion of the African Americans are so inter-connected around the identity issue that it is difficult to view one apart from the other.

African Americans have always had to deal with an identity crisis.[76] What they believed about themselves and how they were identified by the broader society were totally opposite. The identity crisis is seen in the negative ideas

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[74]Ibid., 49.

[75]Michael Battle, *The Black Church In America: African American Christian Spirituality* (Blackwell, 2006), 26-27.

[76]Ibid., 28.

about African Americans and their culture while whites and white culture have always been viewed positively. "... the Black church did not emerge because it wanted to; instead, it emerged out of the necessity to redefine African American identity—especially in the peculiar context of European identities."[77] The quest for identity has always been difficult and challenging because this quest for identity means that the status quo must be changed. African Americans have always wanted to be free physically, mentally and spiritually to be empowered. The quest for identity is a serious quest for empowerment. Black life centers in and is defined by the quest for identity. Persons and groups take great strides in missions of purpose and accomplishment when there is a strong sense of identity.

Perry E. Henderson declares that, "Slavery, racism, and mutilated family relationships led to the formation of the Black church. There would probably be no Black churches today if white churches had practiced New Testament Koinonia."[78] Cain Hope Felder proclaims, "It is no exaggeration to say that the Black church of the Americas was born out of the inability of whites to accept the full humanity and equality of Blacks."[79] Gayraud S. Wilmore says that the Black Church "was born out of the experience of being Black and understanding blackness to be something connected with being held in bondage and needing to

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[77]Ibid.

[78]Perry E. Henderson, *The Black Church Credit Union* (Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 1990), 55.

[79]Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 102.

be free."[80] Dwight N. Hopkins writes, "The only liberated place that enslaved Black fold controlled was the *Invisible Institution*, the foundation for the Black Christian church."[81] The author ascertains that the Black church grew out of the needs of African American people to glorify God and to affirm their own humanity, to find a sense of identity, to have something controlled by African American people, to form an institution whose express purpose would be to celebrate, preserve and enhance the integrity of their personhood under the Lordship of Christ, to be responsive to the needs of African American people and responsible to them.

African Americans brought with them from Africa a world-view. Even though separated from their homeland, they were not separated from their beliefs, sense of being and outlook on the world. Gayraud S. Wilmore emphasizes "It was from within an African religious framework that the slaves made adjustments to Christianity after hearing the gospel. The influences of the African religious past extended into their new life, first in the Caribbean and later in the United States and far from being completely obliterated, were reshaped by the circumstances of enslavement. Slavery, as a matter of fact, only served to drive those influences from the past beneath the surface by force and terror."[82] The slave's sense of who they were could not be destroyed by the harshness of slavery. Elements of African

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[80]Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 14.

[81]Dwight N. Hopkins, *Shores That Fit Our Feet* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 1.

[82]Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism,* 50.

culture have survived in spite of slavery and the effort to stamp out African cultures. Elements of African culture still remain.

> It can be seen in the language in such words as 'yam', 'goober', 'canoe', and 'banjo'. In literature the persistence of African culture can be seen in the folk tales that have been recorded in recent years by American writers. In religion, there are divinations and varied cult practices, some of which can be traced to the African background. In work, in play, in social organizations, and in various aesthetic manifestations, there are some evidences of African culture.[83]

These surviving elements of African culture exemplify the strength of culture and the strong sense of African American identity.

African Americans faced and endured the hardships of slavery with faith and determination. They had no resources or institutions that they could depend upon. "...to be slaves in a foreign land without the culture and religious support of a loving family and a caring community profoundly limits human possibilities. Because Africans were prevented from freely practicing their native religion, they merged their knowledge of their cultural past with the white man's Christian religion."[84] African culture and Christian faith shaped the faith and courage of what appeared to be a powerless people in a hopeless situation. "From these two sources Africans created for themselves a world of meaning that enabled them to survive 244 years of slavery and 100 years of segregation—augmented by a reign

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[83]Frederick W. Schmidt, ed. *The Changing Face of God* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 26.

[84]Ibid., 52.

of white terror that lynched more than five thousand black people."[85] The faith of African Americans provided them with the hope to endure suffering and the courage to face the future. Their faith inspired a sense of identity and empowerment.

Freedom was always at the forefront for African Americans in slavery. Slavery was never totally accepted. "Throughout Black history the term freedom has found a deep religious resonance in the lives and hopes of African Americans… Depending upon the time and the context, the implications of freedom were derived from the nature of the exigency. During slavery it meant release from bondage; after emancipation it meant the right to be educated, to be employed, and to move about freely from place to place."[86] The meaning of freedom for African Americans has always meant more than just physical freedom. Freedom included the spiritual, emotional, and relational dimensions. "In the twentieth century freedom means social, political, and economic justice. …freedom has always meant the absence of any restraint which might compromise one's" responsibility to God. The notion has persisted that if God calls you to discipleship, God calls you to freedom."[87] Responsible living, discipleship and a sense of empowerment require freedom. Freedom and

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[85]Ibid.

[86]Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

[87]Ibid., 4.

personhood are connected together. Freedom is embedded in African American culture.

The idea of freedom was a major concern in the African Americans' life in slavery. They believed that God had made them to be free. Freedom was also essential to their sense of personhood. Identity and freedom were central ideas in the 'Invisible Institution'. "The message of the Invisible church was, however articulated, God wants you free!"[88]

It was the African American slaves' quest for identity empowerment and freedom that helped to bring the Invisible Institution into being.

> Instead of attending and adhering to church services sponsored by slave masters, enslaved Blacks were able to create the invisible institution, a secretive Black church tradition. They consecrated themselves to the purpose of resisting, escaping when possible, and ultimately surviving enslavement in the plantation south, giving rise to the hush harbors.... The biblical references and teaching of these hush harbors, as well as the slave rebellions plotted by Prosser, Vesey, Turner and countless others, were largely centered on the Old Testament narrative of Exodus with its emphasis on God's deliverance of Moses and the Israelites from inhumane slavery."[89]

While white masters attempted to force their Christianity onto their black property, slaves secretly worshipped God. These illegal and hidden religious practices formed the Invisible Institution..."[90] The invisible institution was

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[88]Ibid., 5.

[89]Stacey Floyd, Thomas Juan Floyd, Thomas Card B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 12.

[90]Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 13.

creative, powerful and affirmed positive identity for a people striving to be somebody. The invisible institution gave African Americans a sense of control and empowerment in what appeared to be the powerless situation of slavery which held them in bondage.

Charlie Van Dyke, an ex-slave said the following concerning his experience in a white church: "Church was what they called it; but all the preacher talked about was for us slaves to obey our master and not to lie and steal. Nothing about Jesus was ever said and the overseer stood there to see the preacher talked as he wanted him to talk."[91]

There was a total disregard for African American humanity and identity. Ex-slave Oliver Wendell Jackson says, "The white preacher he told us that a nigger had no more business in heaven than a hog had to be a preacher."[92] The African-American family had no legal existence in slavery. Family members could be separated by the slave masters. Children could be taken away from their families and sold to another slave master in another city, county or state. The slave masters were even known to separate enslaved Africans who had been wedded together in Holy Matrimony. "Slaves marriage had no standing in law."[93]

The separation of family members weakened the family structure of the enslaved African-Americans. The birth of children without the consent or desire

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[91]Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 213-214.

[92]Oliver Wendell Jackson, quoted in William C. Emerson, M.D., *Stories and Spirituals of the Negro Slave* (Boston, MA: The Gorham Press, 1930), 35.

[93]Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Forced Into Glory* (New York, NY: Penguin Book, 1964), 36.

of enslaved African-American women and absence of support from the male persons responsible for fathering the child (whether a white male or an enslaved African), also helped to weaken the family structure of the enslaved African-Americans. "Fatherhood for the enslaved African, under the system of slavery, was a monstrous joke; fatherhood, in fact, was virtually abolished."[94] Many of the children born to enslaved African women grew up without ever knowing their biological father. Historically, African-American males were not given any masculine or racial respect.

"Finding immediate parallels between the Israelites' plights in Pharaoh's Egypt and the struggle of African Americans against American slavery, enslaved Black Christians preferred the lessons garnered from the Exodus story to the theology professed by white supremacists—Christian meekness, docile slaves, and divinely cursed Black people."[95] The religious understanding of African Americans could not be controlled or dominated by the white slave masters. A sense of personhood and hope for a better day by African American slaves provided them with a world view, which sensitized them to insights of freedom in the Bible.

Henry H. Mitchell in *Black Church Beginnings* emphasizes that "cultures are a group's survival kit—their collection of rules, values, and modes of action

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[94]John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2.

[95]Stacey Floyd, Thomas Juan Floyd, Thomas Card B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction.* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2007), 12-13.

for coping with the realities of their existence. This culture took centuries to evolve. It takes generations to change or lose it, even when oppressors attack it by coercive force."[96] The church is central to African American cultures. Almost every aspect of Black life in America is closely aligned with the church. "The Black church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the Black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development."[97]

The role of the church in the African American community should never be taken for granted. From its beginning, the African American church was everything for African Americans. No other institution provided a sense of purpose, empowerment and identity like the church. "The inevitable desire of mixed churches to separate by race came to a head with the organization of black churches in the last half of the eighteenth century. ....It was not just plain and simple racial antipathy or prejudice. It was also the differences in the three 'C's' of class, culture, and control."[98] The church provided African Americans the opportunity to worship, serve and assemble freely. African Americans could also live out their identity and re-define their identity as the people of God and real

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[96]Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings* (Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 15.

[97]Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* 8.

[98]Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings,* 51.

persons of dignity and identity. Having the freedom to be in control of fellowship, beliefs, and worship also meant that African Americans had their *say* in who they were and to whom they belonged. The African American church was more than an institution for worship. The church was a vehicle of hope, a dream for change and a positive strength for *brighter tomorrows*. The church was empowered by God and the church's people gained their identity from the same empowering God. The freedom to be in control of one's own person, dreams, religion, and destiny is necessary to be a real person or people. The desire and freedom to be in control is necessary for personal or group empowerment. Full personhood is never realized when a person is controlled, dominated or humiliated by another. The freedom to be the church, in the church and make decisions as the church gave African Americans a sense of identity that empowered them to realize and actualize their God-given being and potential.

"The centrality of the idea of self-improvement, uplift, the 'advancement of colored people', or elevation, is evident in much of the literature of the slave and the free African American in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In many cases, it was closely connected with the comprehensive cultural vocation of the African American church."[99] African Americans had the faith and determination to be elevated from slavery to freedom. The idea of self-improvement and elevation can clearly be seen in the hope reflected in the spirituals and the political activism of the African American church. "Elevation

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[99]Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (MaryKnoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 362.

emerges as a kind of second stage of self-development, for after the slave became conscious of the fact that despite the chains, he or she had a future, that there was something beyond mere survival—something better in this world as well as the world to come—he or she began climbing the ladder of moral and material elevation. It was assumed that the church would lead the way."[100] The church was seen as God in action—empowering, lifting and even carrying African Americans to higher heights of spirituality and self-improvement. Personal and racial identity was closely connected to the church. The church was central because it provided meaning for life, unity for the community, and a sense of empowerment for African Americans.

The Black church grew out of the needs of African-American people to glorify God and to affirm their own humanity and identity. They wanted to be able to celebrate, preserve and enhance the integrity of their personhood under the Lordship of Christ and to be responsive to the needs of African American people. The Black church became the reality where the enslaved African-Americans socialized, affirmed, inspired, challenged, liberated, and loved. The Black church did not emerge as a result of a doctrinal treatise, but rather from realistic needs of an oppressed people.

The organization of African American churches was the effort of freed Blacks to use their freedom to worship, preach, pray, sing, and focus on their future of freedom. "Once liberated from bondage, the freed people eventually organized their own churches with their own ministers. Most freed Blacks

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[100]Ibid., 263.

considered white ministers incapable of preaching a meaningful message befitting the reality of black worshippers. …even though many had been denied access to formal education, Black preachers nevertheless communicated powerfully and passionately with their parishioners…"[101] African Americans wanted to be themselves which included freedom. They did not feel that white ministers understood their situation or their destiny.

> The major reason for the differences between black and white religion is found at the point of the great differences in life. If religion is inseparable connected with life, then one must assume that slaves' and slaveholders' religious experiences did not have the same meaning because they did not share the same life. They may have used the same words in prayer, song, and testimony or even preached similar sermons. But slaves and slaveholders could not mean the same thing in their verbal and rhythmic expressions because their social and political realities were radically different.[102]
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> Circumstances of life encourage people to ask ultimate questions about themselves and their connection to what they consider the divine…African indigenous religions believe in a God who cares; some call God "the Compassionate One" , others see "the God of pity". Who rescues victims in need. Even more, God is kind and "looks after the case of the poor man". In fact, God is the main hope of the poor in society.[103]

James Cone in *The Spirituals and the Blues* emphasized that while whites were trying to get African Americans to accept white views for African

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[101]Stacey Floyd, Thomas Juan Floyd, Thomas Card B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 19.

[102]James H. Cone, *Speaking The Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 87.

[103]Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet,* 16-17.

Americans; African Americans were believing and working on something different. "While white religion taught Blacks to look for their reward in heaven through obedience to white masters on earth, Black slaves were in fact carving out a new style of earthly freedom."[104] The church gave African Americans a different outlook on life and death while also challenging the status quo. This different outlook was the reflection of African American identity. Issues of life and death were clearly identified by African Americans' self-understanding and personal identity.

African Americans sought to identify and define themselves with a sense of dignity and pride that whites had denied them in religious, political, social and economic institutions. African American identity and empowerment had to face and address inequality and injustice between the races. "Unquestionably, the modern civil rights movement was the most important social protest event of the twentieth century. The civil rights movement would have been impossible without the historic Black church tradition. The term civil rights movement typically refers to a set of noted protest events and reform movements in the United States from 1954 to 1968 aimed at abolishing public and private acts of racial discrimination against African Americans. The movement focused particularly on the plight of African Americans in the Deep South. The civil rights movement intended to provide racial dignity, economic and political self-sufficiency, and freedom from white supremacy."[105] The civil rights movement was very much a

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[104]James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 28.

[105]Floyd, et.al., *Black Church Studies,* 29.

quest for positive Black identity and empowerment. The African American church made up of African American people who believed in God also believed in themselves as empowered to be free. The Invisible Institution was made visible in the African American church. These people were more than property; they were children of God *Marching to Zion.*

Survival and liberation have always been major factors in Black church life. "The survival strategy in the everyday economic life of black people was to just get by or 'surviving' one day at a time."[106] Survival meant to eke out a living by whatever means possible. It meant to stay alive 'until my change comes'. "...They also tended to rely upon an extended kinship network of real and fictive kin. Kin relations frequently provided the only real safety net that they knew, from borrowing and lending money, moving in with kinfolk during times of crisis, and relying upon kin for surrogate child-care while parents worked, or during extended periods of nuclear family reversal. Nevertheless, as important as the stage of survival economics was for poor people, it was inevitably marked by extreme dependency, uncertainty and insecurity."[107] The African American church could not neglect survival. In a situation of helplessness and hopelessness; 'Where could they go but to the Lord?' The church was everything for African Americans.

The African Americans, church became a family for those enslaved Africans who had been uprooted from their original families and those enslaved

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[106]Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church...*, 240.

[107]Ibid., 240-44.

Africans who never really had a nuclear family. African-Americans who had no mother, father, sister or brother found these relationships among members of the Black church. To refer to someone in the Black church as Mother, Father, Sister or Brother who was not through blood kinship was not some abstract idea. "For Black people a family member is not one who necessarily shares someone blood kinship. He or she is one who has come to share the joys, loves, pains, and struggles, mutually."[108] Children were not stigmatized as illegitimate but all children were accepted and loved, whatever the circumstances of their birth. The "most visibly pervasive affirmation of Black belief about people is that they are all related as a family."[109]

"A major function of the family is to socialize children; that is, to tame their impulses and instill values, skills, and desires necessary to run society."[110] Enslaved Africans who were without a nuclear family were taught by elderly enslaved Africans. They were taught how to survive the bondage of slavery, different values from those their master tried to instill in them, and a referent for self-esteem other than the master. Smith says that "slavery did everything humanly and satanically possible to destroy the Black family."[111] Nonetheless, the

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[108]Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 32.

[109]Mitchell and Leweter, *Soul Theology,* 127.

[110]Ibid., 38.

[111]Ibid., 32.

Black church kept the concept of family alive for the enslaved Africans who were continually being uprooted from their families.

"The liberation strategy in the black community… focused on gaining both upward mobility from poverty and eventual economic independence. There was an understanding that real freedom only comes with the attainment of a measure of economic independence and the creation of an independent economic base.... The liberation view also emphasized self-determination, dignity, and a pride in the African and African American heritage and institutions."[112]

Real liberation is under girded by a strong personal and racial identity. Strong identity builds personal and group pride which lead to a positive outlook for African American heritage and institutions. Real liberation begins with the inner person and moves outward to the physical visible institutions. The church is the greatest motivation, encourager, empowering force, and builder of self-esteem in the African American community. There is in church life an understanding of the real needs of its members and community. The African American church has been central, active, and growing because African Americans gain a sense of purpose, spiritual nurturing and the presence of a real family. A healthy self-esteem, personal empowerment and racial pride are gained and nurtured through the church.

Grant H. Shockley once said "All education ultimately is for either domination or liberation, it cannot be for both…spiritually and personal salvation

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[112]Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church...*, 24.

notwithstanding, a major and controlling responsibility of the Black church has been, is, and will continue to be the humanization of the dehumanized and the liberation of the oppressed."[113] The Black church has always had a strong emphasis on education. Education has never been taken lightly or for granted.

> Taking seriously the need to teach its people to survive and to be faithful in the face of oppression and domination, the Black church has become a problem-solving institution assisting its people in survival, resilience, faithful living, and hope. As a problem-solving institution, the Black church articulates, rekindles, heals, and innovates it religious tradition and cultural identity for the present age while looking toward a hopeful future and coming generations. Christian education in the Black church fosters the cultural and religious identity of its membership while equipping its people and healing them from the ravages of oppression. Living together as a community of faith is the way the entire congregation learns and matures in its faith journey. It is in community that strategies of survival and hope are passed from generation to generation. ...Christian education is the work and life of the whole congregation as it grows as a community of faith, a community of oppressed people seeking liberation, a community of persons dedicated to discipleship of Jesus Christ.[114]

Christian education in the Black church involves the totality of life. It is formal and informal, theoretical and practical, structured and unstructured. "Christian education in the Black church strives to re-educate those oppressed by compulsory mis-education during slavery and the subsequent oppressive era of Jim Crow/Jane Crow and segregation."[115]

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[113]Floyd, et.al., *Black Church Studies*, 149.

[114]Ibid., 151.

[115]Floyd, et.al. *Black Church Studies*, 159.

The issues of personal empowerment and racial identity are major concerns for African American worship. "Worship informs and re-informs, shapes, and re-shapes the congregation in shared identity as Christians, as African Americans, men and women, and children of God. For Black churches, the sanctuary at times of worship is the central gathering place for faith and cultural information, moral discourse, vocational imagining, and the rekindling of the shared gospel story."[116] For African Americans worship is never just worship. Worship is about family, faith, community and empowerment. Worship has been and continues to be the major focus of African American Church life.

Preaching is an event in worship for African Americans where the biblical story and the racial story of empowerment come together. The African American preacher must understand the biblical and racial stories. He/she must both be relevant in the preaching moment to the African American person and the situations being faced. The African American preacher cannot be a scholar in the biblical record and not be in touch with the story of African Americans. "Telling the story in Black preaching involves the story of the ancestors and the story of the hearers together. For the African and African American forebears in North America, the biblical narratives of the Israelite people of God and the early Christian church became the stories of the ancestors for the faith community. With each passing generation, their own stories added to the ancestral fount of God's self-revelation and wisdom. The biblical narratives retain sacred authority, not as a distant treasure, but as the preaching praxis of being the hearers into the

[116]Ibid., 151.

story. The development and life of the Black church become part of the story of God's self-revelation in human history."[117] The preacher interprets the scripture, the faith, world events and black identity. "Recreating the sacred story in African American life carries the process of interpretation right into the delivery moments of the preaching event."[118] African American identity is deepened and appreciated in the preaching moment. Preaching is always a shared story as the church worships. African American preaching must always address the racial issues of pain, oppression and liberation in light of the biblical story.

> The role of the Negro church, life that of its pastor; did not stop with Sunday service. The Negro's church was a highly socialized one, performing many functions. The church served as a community center, where one could find relaxation and recreation. It was a welfare agency, dispensing help to the sicker and poorer members. It was a training schools in self-government, in the handling of money, and in the management of business.[119] The Black church has historically tried to meet the needs of African-Americans as a caring and compassionate church. The Black church is at the center of Black life in America.

The quest for African American empowerment involves the totality of African American life. African culture, slavery, the Invisible Institution, the church, spirituals, worship, preaching, civil rights efforts, oppression, racism and countless other factors reveal the striving and yearning for positive African American identity in a hostile and demeaning culture and environment of a racist

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[117]Ibid., 218.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro In the Making of America* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 12.

America. Throughout the history of African Americans in the United States, they have used religion, politics, the church and any means related to blackness to carve and shape positiveness about themselves. It is clear that African Americans have refused to let white Americans or anybody else define who they were, what they should believe and what their dreams should be. Only African Americans have the right to speak to their purpose, goals and empowerment. They have the God-given right to declare *This is who we are!*

A broad historical summary of African American male presence in the African American church is shared by Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. in the foreword of *Adam! Where Are You?* "We have moved from a time when Black men were in the majority in congregations, through a time when men were the plurality in most congregations, to the present when men are a pitiful minority in most Black congregations. When surveying the six historic Black denominations that have memberships in the United States of over 2 million each, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya point out in their classic work *(The Black Experience in Religion)* that there is a movement of African American men away from Christianity toward Islam."[120] This exit of Black men from the African American church continues to the present. Jawanza Kunjufu relates that in the past, "Strong Black men banded together under the banner of Jesus Christ to throw off the yoke of slavery and in this period the number of Black men in the congregation (percentage wise) were four times what they are today. Black men

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[120]Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?* (African American Images, 1994), vi.

who were Christians were much more likely to have what Cornel West calls *a combative spirituality.*[121] They were empowered to confront the evils of slavery in spite of the overwhelming odds against them.

Jawanza Kunjufu declares "I am positive that one of the major reasons for the success of the nation of Islam and most Christian churches that have been able to attract men is they have provided the group with an opportunity to learn and appreciate their culture. Many men have been taught very little about their history."[122]

African American males have like all African Americans, spoken to their own identity, dreams, goals, beliefs and actions. African American males have faced oppression, racism and de-humanization. A strong and positive sense of purpose is necessary for African American Males to belong, grow, and participate in the African American church. When they are encouraged, supported, and motivated, they participate with a high level of commitment. They have the self-motivation to make major accomplishment in the ministry of the church. The encouragement to serve in the church's ministry means that African American males are loved, trusted and wanted. History proclaims that the African American

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[121]Ibid.

[122]Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (African American Images, 1982), 64.

church and males have made major accomplishments in ministry when they are loved, needed and empowered.

Men Empowered by the Church

The African American church has influenced, encouraged and empowered the lives of millions of believers in Jesus Christ. The lives of African American men have also been given identity, encouragement and empowerment in a society where African American manhood has either been denied or ignored historically. Ten men will be presented in the following pages that have been influenced and encouraged by the African American church. The lives of these men clearly reveal that much of their success, achievements and positiveness about life are the result of the African American church's impact on their lives. Nine of these men presented are African American: Deion Sanders, Cornell West, Samuel D. Proctor, Byron Pitts, Johnnie Cochran, Ben Carson, Howard Thurman, Benjamin E. Mays, Martin Luther King, Jr. and one German, Deitrich Bonhoeffer.

The lives of these men were meaningful and had a sense of purpose because they were loved, accepted and had a sense of belonging in the church.

Deion Sanders

Deion Sanders became known as *Prime Time.* "He was the hottest defensive back in the National Football League and a base-stealing sensation in

Major League Baseball. He was the only athlete in history to play in both a World Series and a Super Bowl."[123]

Deion Sanders' story is one where he recognized that the promise of fulfillment through power, money and sex is a false promise. His story is one where his success almost destroyed him to the point where he became suicidal. Deion Sanders describes how he rose from being insignificant to receiving great public attention. The attention was based on power, money and sex. He was held in high esteem by people because he had certain athletic skills. But he also realized how empty he was becoming on the inside. The idols of money, sex and power could not bring him happiness. Mr. Sanders had an inner restlessness.

The church was Deion Sanders saving grace. Persons were placed in Mr. Sanders life that helped to bring him to faith in Jesus Christ. These persons out of their faith shared their best in an effort to bring out his best. Mr. Sanders committed himself to his church, The Potter's House Church in Dallas, Texas where Bishop T. D. Jakes is the pastor.

Deion Sanders was humble enough to submit himself to the truth of the gospel. The scripture of the Bible was central in enabling Mr. Sanders to be transformed by the *renewing of his mind*. His love and trust for Bishop Jakes empowered Mr. Sanders to trust this servant of the church. The church also provided him with meaningful fellowship which respected and appreciated him as a person. The church recognized him for who he was. The church helped Sanders

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[123]Deion Sanders, *Power, Money, and Sex* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing 1999), Cover.

to see the world, other people and himself in spiritual dimensions. Deion Sanders discovered real success in being a person of God through church life.

> People ask me, 'Where is Deion going from here?' The answer is simple: ministry. God has called me to the ministry and its high calling. It's no coincidence that Bishop Jakes is my spiritual father, my daddy in Christ. It's no coincidence that I met Pastor David Forbes the way I did. I was going to a charity basketball game and my agent wanted me to meet this guy who has a really dynamic ministry up in Columbus, and I agreed to do that. It's no coincidence that the Lord has surrounded me with all These wonderful people that have poured into my life.[124]

Cornel West

Cornel West is an educator, philosopher, author and public intellectual. Maya Angelou says that "Cornel West thinks like a sage, acts like a warrior and writes like a poetical prophet".[125]

West declares that his story starts in the church. He says that the Shiloh Baptist Church is where his roots are. He sees that his character was shaped by his relationship to Jesus Christ and books. Cornel West is continually inspired, empowered and motivated by the faith of the church.

He tells his first sermon in junior church which depicted Jesus as a *water of life*[126]. In the sermon West "compared the pure water of Christ to kool-aid—

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[124]Ibid., 230.

[125]Cornel West, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud* (New York, NY: Smiley Books, 2009), Cover.

[126]Ibid., 40.

one can sustain you, the other can't."[127] He describes how the congregation became excited. But West says that he has never received a calling to preach. At the same time, West has a strong commitment to the Christian faith and a deep love for the church. Cornel West shares his baptism in the church with great conviction and commitment.

Cornel West shared his love for the church and his pastor, William P. Cooke, with great appreciation. West says that during the preaching of Rev. Cooke there would be Holy Ghost visitations. He shared that Rev. Cooke began each sermon by quoting Psalm 121—"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord."[128] Later in life, West said when speaking in churches he would start with the same scripture.

Cornel West has always remained close to the church and the church's preaching. He says "of course, I came to faith and remain in faith, as a prophetic Christian."[129] West even proclaims "I can't live along the slippery slopes of life's abyss without the Jesus that I saw in the heart of my mom, my dad, my brother and my sister.[130]

> Cornel West describes the importance of the church to his sitting in the pew next to Mom, "I see tears streaming from her eyes as her oldest son stands before the congregation wearing the red tie symbolizing his deaconship. It's a beautiful thing, sitting there I'm experiencing a beautiful

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[127]Ibid.

[128]West, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud,* 40.

[129]Ibid., 112.

[130]Ibid., 113.

> feeling. I realize that when all is said and done, I'm a Shiloh Baptist kind of brother. This is where I grew up and this is where I've returned. These are my roots, my righteous beginnings. It is in this holy sanctuary surrounded by family—those present and those gone off to glory—that I understand where my story starts. It starts in this church."[131]

Cornel West is inspired by Jesus, empowered by the church, strengthened by preaching and does quite a bit of preaching himself. Thank God!

Samuel D. Proctor

Samuel D. Proctor served as president of both North Carolina A and T State University and Virginia Union. He was the associate director of the Peace Corp, Professor of Education at Rutgers University and he served as pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City for 17 years. Dr. Proctor made tremendous contributions as a preacher/theologian, educator, ambassador for peace, a pastor and spiritual leader.

Bill Moyers describes the genius and commitment of this giant. "For the moral odyssey of Samuel Proctor has been to live a whole life in a fractured world and to grow faith in hard places."[132] Here was a great life whose foundation was simple faith and trust in God.

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[131]Ibid., 8.

[132]Samuel Proctor, *Samuel Proctor: My Moral Odyssey.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 13.

Samuel Proctor's entire life was motivated and inspired by the church. Proctor declared that *Sunday was a special day.*[133] It was the church that gave every Sunday its distinction. The church provided enthusiasm, fellowship, religious instruction and family solidarity. His father carried them to Sunday school and was as much a participant as the children were.

Dr. Proctor always gave the church a place of positive inspiration, encouragement and fellowship throughout his entire life. He described how he became a candidate for baptism. "One Sunday morning I got up early, walked two and a half miles off campus to a Baptist church, heard a moving sermon and submitted myself for baptism."[134] Proctor, eighteen years old, said that the "playboy and the preacher bid for my soul".[135] He said that the love that he had for the church inspired him to be there every Sunday. The church's message about Jesus Christ attracted him more and more away from the playboy images which seemed less and less satisfying. The church was central for Samuel D. Proctor in his values, commitments, work and love for people.

Samuel Proctor describes how his life was a calling to the church.

> Concerning our freedom, perhaps the most crucial use of freedom is the long reach into our future that we make when we commit our lives to a life's work, such as teaching, preaching, medicine, military service, or the performing arts---to a career calling for a heavy investment of preparation and a long risk. In 1940, I made the

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[133]Ibid., 23.

[134]Samuel Proctor, *Samuel Proctor: My Moral Odyssey* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 59.

[135]Ibid., 59.

> commitment to the work of the church, and when I returned to college, I was serious about it. Proctor described how his faith grew.[136] "After many years of observing, participating, teaching, lecturing, preaching, counseling, and holding on, I have learned that the source of my strength has been that there is a God, a God who is aware of our strivings. Life does not all have to balance out here and now. The inner life is equipped for immortality.[137]

Byron Pitts

Byron Pitts grew up in inner-city Baltimore. His parents separated when he was twelve years old. His mother worked two jobs to support the family. Pitts was illiterate and a stutterer. Pitts had a difficult childhood and life. He rose above his struggles and difficulties to become a correspondent for 60 Minutes and chief national correspondent for CBS News.

The church was always central in the life, growth, and achievements of Byron Pitts. He described how Reverend Benita Lewis spoke for Women's Day at St. Paul Baptist Church in 2007. He describes how his breath was taken away when he heard the words *Step out on Nothing.*[138] They were challenged to put their lives and challenges in God's hand. This message and the church always encouraged and motivated Pitts to face and deal with the difficulties of life.

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[136]Ibid., 60.

[137]Ibid., 126.

[138]Byron Pitts, *Step Out on Nothing* (Griffin, NY: St. Martin's, 2010), 4.

Pitts said, "I felt out of place almost everywhere except in church."[139] Church provided comfort, love and support. It also was for Pitts place to escape from the relational troubles between his parents and forget about his own weaknesses.

The New Shiloh Baptist Church for Byron Pitts was "the most sacred place on earth".[140] The church provided safety and love. Pitts emphasized that the place, the music and even the smell "seemed to heal all that ailed me."[141] The church gave joy and peace. He said, "My mom called church the poor man's therapy session."[142]

Byron Pitts always had a great love for the church. The church was a great source of strength. He described how in 2005 that he had an assignment in Iraq for CBS. He felt unprepared physically and spiritually. Byron Pitts went to church with his family. The church prayed for Pitts. He gained inner peace, inner calm and a sense of contentment. The church for Byron Pitts was never just empty talk, but his faith was nurtured, encouraged and strengthened through the church.

Johnnie Cochran

Johnnie Cochran was an outstanding, well-known and controversial lawyer. "His clients included Michael Jackson, Reginald Denny, Snoop Doggy

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[139]Ibid., 25.

[140]Ibid., 26.

[141]Pitts, *Step Out on Nothing*, 26.

[142]Ibid., 27.

Dogg, Aretha Franklin, Tupac Shakur, Sean P. Diddy Combs, Todd Bridges, Geronimo Pratt, Jim Brown and O. J. Simpson."[143] He knew how to represent the rich and famous but he had the reputation for providing the *man in the street* an opportunity for justice. Too many people miss the intellectual, personal and spiritual sides of this very public lawyer.

Johnnie Cochran declares that "I am a religious man. I find comfort in my faith."[144] Cochran said that he prayed a lot during trials but not to win. He said that he prayed to give and do his very best with the hope that justice would be done. It is clear that faith is not just empty rhetoric for Johnnie Cochran. His faith rises out a sincere love and commitment to God.

Johnnie Cochran grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana. He said that he became a lawyer to change society for the better. His idol was Thurgood Marshall. Cochran said that he never sought to compete against whites but to work and compete within the standards.

Johnnie Cochran was nurtured within a strong family and the church. He said that he always prayed to be strong and prepared. He wanted the Lord to use him as an *instrument to achieve justice.*[145] He said he also prayed to be prepared and accept whatever God had in store for him. These ideas of Mr. Cochran were planted and shaped by the African American church.

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[143]Johnnie Cochran, *A Lawyer's Life* (Griffin, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2002), Cover.

[144]Ibid., 104.

[145]Ibid.

Dr. William Saxe Epps was Mr. Cochran's pastor in Los Angeles. When he stayed in New York over the weekend, he would worship at the great Abyssinian Baptist Church where Dr. Calvin Butts was the pastor. It is clear that Johnnie Cochran loved and appreciated the church. The church provided him with peace, power and fellowship. He could function publicly because privately the church helped to provide worship, prayer, personal identity and a sense of belonging.

> Cochran stated "I am a religious man. I find comfort in my faith. I have been active in my church and I attend services regularly. I do pray a lot during trials. I don't pray to win, but rather that I will be able to do the best that I can. That I will be strong; that I will be prepared. That I will leave no stone unturned. I pray that the Lord will use me as His instrument to achieve justice. And then I pray that whatever His will, whatever God has in store for me, I will be prepared for it and I will accept it."[146]

Ben Carson

"Ben Carson has become on of the most celebrated neurosurgeons in the world. He rose from his childhood in inner-city Detroit to his position as director of pediatrics neurosurgery at John's Hopkins Hospital."[147] Ben Carson did not believe that his success as a neurosurgeon meant that he was better than other. He believed that God gave him the talent to do his job well. He also believed that whatever talents God had given him should be shared with others.

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[146]Ibid., 104.

[147]Ben Carson. *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990),. Cover.

Carson's parents separated when he was about eight years old. It was hard for him to accept, but at eight years old, he also had his first religious experience. They were Seventh-Day Adventists. He had a conversion experience after hearing Pastor Ford proclaim, "If we place our faith in the Lord, we will always be safe, safe in Jesus Christ."[148] Young Carson and his brother, Curtis was baptized.

Carson tells an interesting story that the worship services and Bible lessons often focused on missionary doctors. It was after hearing these stories that he shared with his mother that he wanted to be a doctor. It is interesting that Carson's desire to become a doctor was planted in his spirit by the church.

The church was and is central in the life of Ben Carson. He participates in church life on a regular basis. His prayer life is nurtured through the church. He prays faithfully with patients and family members.

Ben Carson teaches young people to think big. He teaches them to "Never get too big for God, never drop God out of you life."[149] The church has given Carson inner strength and peace. It has also provided him with the love, patience and kindness to care for people as a doctor and as a person. What a testimony!

Howard Thurman

Howard Thurman was a great intellect and spiritual thinker. His spiritual depth has helped to shape minds like Martin Luther King, Jr. and all who have taken the time to wrestle with any of his writings. "Dr. Thurman wrote twenty-

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[148]Ibid., 26.

[149]Ibid., 219.

two books of spiritual discovery and inspiration".[150] Many persons claim that Martin King always carried with him a copy of Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited.*

Howard Thurman was always closely connected to the church. His mother had a strong church life and prayer life. Thurman declared that "In the fellowship of the church, particularly in the experience of worship, there was a feeling of sharing in primary community".[151] He said that more than all the other communal ties, it also undergirded one's sense of personal identity. He said it could be summed up in the passage "If God is for you, who can prevail against you."[152]

Thurman declared that membership in the church gave the member a sense of worth that could not be destroyed by any of life's evils.[153] Dr. Thurman has a great love for the church. The church provided him with a foundation for being loved and showing love for others.

Dr. Thurman was a co-founder of the Interdenominational Fellowship Church in San Francisco, the first fully integrated church in America. He was Dean of the Chapel at Boston University for several years. He was always a pastor. He loved people—all people.

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[150]Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), Cover.

[151]Ibid., 17.

[152]Ibid., 18.

[153]Ibid., 18.

The church's worship inspired and lifted the spirit of Dr. Thurman. The church and Howard Thurman were inseparable. Certain hymns spoke to him which describes his faith such as "Breathe on Me Breath of God", "Oh, Master, Let Me Walk with The" "Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart."[154] Howard Thurman stayed close to his church life, his faith and his God.

> In the fellowship of the church, particularly in the experience of worship, there was a feeling of sharing in primary community. Not only did church membership seem to bear heavily upon one's ultimate destiny, beyond death and the grave, more than all the other communal ties, it also undergirded one's sense of personal identity. It was summed up in the familiar phrase "If God is for you, who can prevail against you."[155]
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> A 'saved soul', as symbolized by conversion and church membership, gave you a personal validation that transcended time and space, because it's ultimate guarantor was God through Jesus Christ. It was nevertheless of primary importance to the individual living in 'real' time and 'real' space. Membership in the 'fellowship of believers' provided the communal experience of being part of a neighborhood and gave the member a frontal sense of worth that could not be destroyed by any of life's outages.[156]

Benjamin E. Mays

Benjamin E. Mays was an outstanding educator, scholar, author, and President of Morehouse College for twenty-seven years. He grew up in Ninety Six, South Carolina.

The church was central in the life of Dr. Mays and the entire community. Mays declared that church was the only place for Negroes to go. It was the

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[154]Thurman, *With Head and Heart,*179.

[155]Ibid., 17.

[156]Ibid., 18.

worship and social center. Mays said that his mother's religious faith had great influence on him.[157]

Mays said that as a boy, the minister said that he would preach. He said that Reverend Marshall showed great interest in him. It is amazing that much of what Mays became originated in the church and with Reverend Marshall.

Mays said that the people in the church did not give him one dime towards his education; but, they gave to him something that was far more valuable. "They gave me encouragement, the thing I most needed. They expressed such confidence in me that I could never betray their trust, never let them down".[158]

The church provided Mays with the motivation, encouragement, and trust to push him on to greatness in education, improving race relations, and inspiring great minds. Mays' achievements, successes, and motivation of young minds must forever be traced back to a little two-Sunday church in an insignificant place named Ninety Six.

> Old Mount Zion was an important institution in my community. Negroes had nowhere to go but to church. They went there to worship, to hear the choir sing, to listen to the preachers and to hear and see the people shout. The young people went to Mount Zion to socialize or simple to stand around and talk. It was a place of worship and a social center as well. There was no other place to go.[159]

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[157]Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 11.

[158]Ibid., 17.

[159]Ibid., 13.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a preacher, pastor, theologian, civil rights leader, humanitarian, Nobel Peace Prize recipient, and a champion for freedom. The church influenced every aspect of his life, work and achievements. On one occasion, King said that he had always been a part of the church. Every aspect of King's life was motivated, encouraged and enlightened by the church. King was loved, accepted and encouraged as the pastor's son and as a pastor himself. King's message of love, hope and freedom grew out of the church.

Jesus was King's major inspiration. His preaching, teaching and civil rights activism was inspired and encouraged by Jesus. Jesus was the paradigm for how life was to be lived for King. King's understanding of the gospel came from the church.

King's method and tone for preaching and teaching were planted in him by the church. His father was a preacher and he heard some of the greatest pulpiteers in the African American church tradition. Many of his ideas and language are very common in the African American church. King was a great leader but he was not totally original. King, to a great extent, was produced by the church.

Many of the persons who helped to shape the spiritual, intellectual and civil thought of King were very much committed to and influenced by the church. Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays, Martin King, St. Walter Raschenbusch, Harold DeWolf, C. L. Franklin, Gardner Taylor, Wyatt T. Walker, Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, Harold Carter, Sr and Countless others had significant influence on King and were themselves motivated by the church.

King always stayed close to the church. His commitment to the church was consistent in marching for freedom receiving awards, standing up for garbage workers, protesting the Vietnam War or tenderly caring for his family. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a champion for the mission of the church.

King believed that "The minister must be both sincere and intelligent."[160] King often warned against the church's pursuit of emotionalism rather than a sincere and committed faith. King emphasized that the preacher/pastor must understand the experiences of the people. Only then will the preacher be able to address the needs and longings of the people through the preached word and minister to their concerns as a pastor. King always had a preacher's powerful proclamation and pastor's caring concern. King was a preacher/pastor even in very public stands and proclamations.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was motivated, encouraged, loved and supported by the church. The church pushed King to *keep on keeping on*. A pastor is the spiritual leader of a church. King, the pastor, was the church's spiritual leader who would lead the church (society) to higher heights of love in integration, fight for every citizen, and end the Vietnam War. He had a great dream where all people could live as brothers and sisters. King could have never led the fight for freedom, equal opportunity, racial equality and dignity without the support and

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[160]Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, NY: Grand Central, 1998), 18.

power of the church. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not just the pastor for African Americans; however, he was American's preacher/prophet. May King's Dream become a reality and may the church continue to inspire, encourage and empower church members to be disciples.

> Martin Luther King, Jr. warned against the church embracing classism and exclusivism. The church must be the unifying community as shared in "The Drum Major Instinct" and "the church is the one place where a doctor ought to forget that he's a doctor. The church is the one place a Ph.D. ought to forget that he's a Ph.D. The church is the one place that a school teacher ought to forget the degree she has behind her name. The church is the one place where the lawyer ought to forget that he's a lawyer and any church that violates the 'whosoever will, let him come' doctrine is a dead, cold church, and nothing but a little social club with a thin veneer of religiosity." King further states, "It's the one place where everybody should be the same standing before a common master and savior. And recognition grows out of this—that all men are brothers because they are children of a common father." [161] Martin Luther King, Jr. believed the church should promote unity and peace among people.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer made a serious decision to leave the safety of America in 1939 for Hitler's Germany. He sought deliverance of Germany from Hitler and Nazism. Hitler was a threat to Europe and indeed the world. Hitler was also intent on exterminating all Jews. Bonhoeffer believed that the call of God was upon his life to stand against Hitler.

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[161] James M. Washington, Editor, *I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 186.

Bonhoeffer was motivated and encouraged by an African American church in New York City, the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Bonhoeffer had attended Riverside Church were Harry Fosdick was the pastor. Bonhoeffer felt that "the heart of the gospel had been marginalized."[162] Church life in his opinion was not much more than a social gathering. The church was like a "social corporation".[163] The church was not, in his view, serious about the gospel of Jesus Christ. The exception for Bonhoeffer was in the "Negro Churches."[164] The pastor of Abyssinian Church was Dr. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. He had great vision and faith along with being a powerful preacher. Bonhoeffer said that he saw the gospel preached and lived out obediently to God. He was drawn to this Negro church.

Bonhoeffer was captivated by the music in Abyssinian. "The joyous and transformative power of this music solidified his thinking on the importance of music to worship."[165] Surely, the hope, joy and enthusiasm in the music were the expressions of ex-slaves and others who were still excited about God and freedom. This Abyssinian Church family became in many respects Bonhoeffer's church family. He attended worship every Sunday and taught a Sunday school

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[162]Eric Metexas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 106.

[163]Ibid., 107.

[164]Ibid.

[165]Ibid., 109.

class of boys. He became active in various groups of the church. Many members had great trust in Bonhoeffer and invited him into their homes.

It is clear that Bonhoeffer was inspired, encouraged and empowered through the Abyssinian Church which was African American. He was welcomed, loved and accepted by a congregation of believers who had been enslaved, oppressed and hurt. Emptiness in his spirit was met by this church of Negroes who was the powerless race in America. Bonhoeffer took his stand against Hitler. He took his stand against evil as a disciple of Jesus Christ. He died as a martyr for his courage to stand against the evil of Hitler and the wrong of hate.

Bonhoeffer had the hope and faith to go back to Germany. He had the courage to stand against Hitler. He had the willingness to die for the cause of Jesus Christ. Could it be that Bonheoffer's hope, faith, courage and conviction were influenced and inspired by the spiritual awakening within him at the Abyssinian Church?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The context for this research project is Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Conway, South Carolina. The focus is *A Model for Male Participation in an African American Church*. The African American church has had a significant decrease of male presence and participation; a dilemma many African American churches are facing. However, the context for this research project revealed something very different. Instead of a decrease in male participation, there had been a significant increase. The male membership in the Friendship Church was about ten percent in 1983; since then, it had grown to about forty percent in 2009. The effort in this project was to examine the increase in the male participation and to explain the factors that influenced such an increase in the male participation in the life of the church.

The hypothesis for this project is that if the church would provide men with meaningful tasks to perform, the results will be satisfaction, male bonding, fervent fellowship and increased responsibility. It is anticipated that the proposed project model will create enthusiasm from proposed accomplishments, stimulating the men to embrace new tasks and responsibilities.

The project model was identified as the *Ministry Task Model*. The Ministry Task Model was used because it helps the reader to relate to the difficulty of getting men involved in the life of the church. While statistics say that men are reluctant to participant

in the life of the church, there are congregations who have defied this fact and excel with strong men's ministries and participation. However, it is interesting that as a whole, there are many reasons for men regardless of race or ethnicity not participating in the life of the church.

According to an article by Paul Coughlin entitled, *Why Some Men Don't Like Church,* Coughlin says: "Many of my readers have told me why they stopped going to church and what they would like to see in order to want to attend again. So here are the "Top 10 Reasons Why Some Men Don't Go to Church," and when they do go they spend more time checking their watches and working on their To Do lists than partaking in soul work."[1] The 10 reasons that Coughlin cite are as follows:

1. Men are told over and over to be innocent as doves, but are not shown or encouraged to be wise as serpents. This has handcuffed men in all major aspects of life, robbing them of power and strength. Jesus never said that personal piety alone will get us to the abundant he has for us, but you wouldn't know this from a typical church service. The same word for 'wise" that Jesus used can also be translated as shrewd and cunning. Jesus commends shrewd behavior as found in the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16). We largely condemn shrewdness and think it's synonymous with criminal behavior. The church wants nice men. Jesus, according to his own words, wants shrewd ones.

2. We preach from the NGB: Nice Guy Bible (Retail Price: Your Soul). We emphasize the sweet stuff and let the tougher stuff go right on by. That sweet stuff won't save a man (or woman) from the Dark Night of The Soul, a highly mentioned phrase first written by St. John of the Cross. But the more rugged Scriptures can and do. For example, it was the book of Ecclesiastes that brought President Abraham Lincoln more solace during the Civil War than another other writing. Unfortunately the meatier and more penetrating scriptures aren't emphasized much today. As a result, much of what we label as spiritual living just isn't "real" to your average guy.

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[1]Paul Coughlin, "Why Some Men Don't Like Church" http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/why-some-men-dont-like-church-1393422.html (accessed October 19, 2011).

3. We contend that the ideal Christian man is unemotional and if married, sacrifices everything for his wife. But Jesus was anything but stoic. If we were honest, we would say that Jesus was a bad Christian man because he got angry so much. According to the latest study from the University of Virginia, this false expectation toward stoicism sets men up for divorce from women who want an emotionally engaged husband (Our upcoming book *Married But Not Engaged* takes this issue head on by showing wives of passive and unemotional husbands what they should and shouldn't do to help.) And men who sacrifice all their wants and needs for their spouse eventually bore their spouse. Following such advice increases their chances of divorce.

4. Men have been told to avoid anger at all costs, which isn't what the Bible says. They have not been shown a better way: how to properly handle this primary emotion for guys since unresolved anger can lead to depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and even impotency.

5. We promote a dangerous caricature of "gentle Jesus meek and mild," an infamous and ludicrous term penned by the late John Wesley. This dangerous caricature is as fictitious as anything you'll find in Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. We can't blame Hollywood or the mainstream media. We can blame ourselves. This caricature has encouraged Christian men to be nice to a fault, damaging their lives and those who are under their timid care.

6. Men, compared to women, are a problem to be fixed instead of a gender to be appreciated at church. This is mighty unattractive and unbiblical. Some of these churches have also given men the unbiblical belief that women are more moral and spiritual, an intrinsically shame-filled message that is also a form of gender bigotry.

7. The church and Christian radio have failed to support a married man's need for regular sexual intimacy with his wife, which is an insult and a betrayal. We are men, not eunuchs.

8. Christian men are unintentionally encouraged to become the plaything of other men in a misguided attempt to bolster their "Christian witness." We have been turned into doormats and anvils, instead of bold hammers like the fathers of our faith. We are encouraged to worship at the altar of other people's approval. Proverbs 28:1 says that the righteous are as bold as lions. Bold men are both rare and not really welcomed at church.

9. We unintentionally create spiritual veal: overprotected children who are taught to embrace false humility and false meekness. Kids who rarely, if ever, disagree with authority, even when it's corrupt. Mild children afraid of the world because they are not shown how to live in the real world (See February's Dispatch and the story, "Suicide and the 'Nice' Christian Teen. All previous newsletters can be found on the Free Newsletter portion of our website). Sons and daughters who don't possess a powerful opinion or functioning will because they are deemed unChristian, which sets them up for destructive peer pressure (I deal with this tragic problem in next year's release of *Raising Good Kids in a 'Nice' World*). This list goes on. Men sense this and do not want this transformation to occur in their children. So they stay away. Sunday School too often creates nice and passive kids instead of good ones.

10. Worship music is often too sentimental for guy tastes.[2]

In another article by Cobb specifically targeted to Black men, entitled, *Why Black Men Don't Church*, the list was somewhat shorter but just as revealing. Cobb says: "It turns out that my topic has been switched. Instead of talking about black male myths, I'll be talking about something akin to a black male fact, which I can only come at from a personal angle. This fact? Black men ain't at church on Sunday, at least not with the frequency and regularity of Black women. I can only speculate as to why, but I'll give you several semi-serious reasons and excuses that Black men like me have difficulties with being in church every Sunday."[3]

> The Personal Reasons
> These are the reasons I think I share with a lot of brothers, some of them admittedly trifling, but I'm telling you honestly what goes through a mind that's in bed on a Sunday morning.
>
> You Can't Preach
> My number one reason for avoiding church is the low quality of the oration of some of the preachers out there. How many times

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Why Black Men Don't Church, http://cobb.typepad.com/cobb/2006/09/why_black_men_d.html (accessed October 19, 2011.)

have I heard ministers drone on and on about Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and how we must make our own transformations and leave our prior lives behind? How many times have I heard ministers talk about their own temptations and how they were worthless sinners and skirt chasers and how all us men are dogs like they used to be? How many times have I had to sit through the junior minister stumbling or the guest pastor from out of town.

It's My Money
Yeah that's right, and guess what? God doesn't need my money. The Church needs my money. They've always needed my money and they've always tried to convince me that God wants me to give it to them. I've been praying to Jesus since I was 8 years old and never once has He told me, "can you help a brotha out?" I understand that I owe something to my less fortunate brothers, but I'll be damned (I guess so) before I give it to a minister who drives a better car than me. I don't mind supporting ministries, but I've got my priorities.

It's My Day Off
A brother works hard all week long. Now if I could go to Church at 10am and be done at 11am, I'd be fine. But you know and I know some ministers act like we have nothing else to do *all day* Sunday. OK I understand that you slaved over a hot desk working on that sermon all week and you just can't wait to rock our worlds with your message, but uhm... some of us are just checking in.

Church is Just Church
And I've got options. Now I could envision one day, perhaps after I have paid my debt to society and get out of jail and don't have a job or any friends or anyone who trusts me, I will be in church all the time. I'll come on Sunday, and I'll hang around and eat all the cookies, and I'll stare lovingly at the homely single women in their 40s, and I'll be back for Bible Study. And I'll come on the day we read to the shut-ins, and I'll volunteer to drive the church bus. I'll always help put away the chairs in the parish hall and I'll straighten out all the fliers on the bulletin board. But until then I actually do have a busy life to enjoy that centers around my family and community, not church. I got places to go and things to do.[4]

While these compelling reasons have validity and provide a wealth of stimulating conversation, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church is an example of what happens when

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[4]Ibid.

pastoral leadership dare to vision and stand on God's word regarding the desires of the pastor's heart. The Ministry Task Model for increasing male participation in the church began as a vision and desire of the writer because there was a growing need for male presence in the life of the church. The process began by simply identifying a ministry task that draws men together that would create an environment of trust and mutuality compelling them to want to work together to accomplish a common goal.

The writer readily admits that there were a number of ministry tasks to be done around Friendship Church, such as the creation of a men's ministry, a Super Bowl men's fellowship, participation in the recreation ministry, men's cleanup group and establishing a men's dialogue society. However at Friendship that task was the male chorus.

The writer vividly remembers on Father's Day, when the men were being recognized for fatherhood that it was identified and requested that the men become a more visible and active presence in the life of the church. As a result of this desire and request, a male choir was established as the catalyst for increasing male participation in the life of the church, especially since there was no male choir previously. The church musician who was female, was asked to assist in establishing a male choir during the Father's Day celebration. Thirteen men came forth to begin a ministry that would evolve and branch out into other areas of the church, captivating over 35% of the men in various ministry capacities.

Further reflection would reveal that at the initial choir rehearsal, all 13 men who committed to the task of increasing the men's presence in the life of the church were present. From this initial meeting, the men committed to meeting for rehearsal every Monday at 7:00 P.M. After about a month of rehearsing and singing to an empty church,

the male choir made its debut at a Sunday morning worship service. From their debut, the male choir was placed in rotation and sang every third Sunday of the month. After about 4 years of faithful service, the male choir grew to about 17 members.

From the ministry task of forming a male choir, God began to move in the life of the men of the church. At the request of the writer/pastor, the men who sang as part of the male choir officially began to form a men's Bible study. This class began with approximately three – four men and quickly moved to approximately 10 -18 men after six months. Today there are about 25 men who actively participate in Bible study which is the largest class in the church.

Additionally, more and more men became involved in the life of the church and a Men's brotherhood began with about 2-4 men and evolved to about 35 men over a period of 7 years. This group began to perform simple tasks around the church which stimulated the desire for more men to come and participate.

Ultimately, the Ministry Task Model of ministry empowered the men of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church to serve, fellowship, be recognized and given a sense of ownership in the life of the church.

The research design selected from this study is qualitative. Creswell emphasizes that in qualitative research, the researcher is involved closely with those being studied. The researcher seeks to involve the persons involved in the research.[5]

To test the hypothesis, interviews were conducted with twenty men in the church. These men represented mixed income, educational and age levels who have become members of the church at different periods of time. The focus in testing the hypothesis is

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[5]John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 6.

to examine whether the men in the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church would support the idea that when they were given a ministry task, they were enthusiastic in the accomplishment of the task of ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

A Model for Male Participation In An African American Church is the title for this project. The context is Friendship Missionary Baptist Church located in Conway, South Carolina. The project was planned and implemented during the summer of 2011.

The research project seeks to explain the increase of male participation in the FMBC. There had been a lack of male presence in the church. This male presence grew significantly. This project sought to examine the causes for this increase. The Agreement Model of the Likert Scale was used. Twenty men of the FMBC were given a twenty item interview questionnaire. Each participant responded to the items on the questionnaire during the interview.

The Professional Associates selected for this project had great experience in pastoring. All were very willing to listen, offer advice and suggestions. They were very excited about the project's focus on male participation an African American church. This had been a concern for them in their pastorates.

The Context Associates selected for this project were very enthusiastic about the increase in male participation in the Friendship Church. The context associates had seen the growth of male participation and had been a part of the growth.

The Project Interview Questionnaire

The men selected to participate in this research were men who had been very active in organizations, committees and other activities of the church. The Likert Scale's Agreement Model was used. The ages represented were: two (10%) 31-40; three (15%) 41-50; five (25%) 51-60; seven (35%) 61-70 and three (15%)71 and above. The education levels represented were: seven-high school; eight-bachelors; three masters; and two-other. The group of men selected for the research was very diverse educationally and in age.

This researcher holds that there is sufficient support for the hypothesis in this project. The men who participated in this research solidly supported the hypothesis in examining the increase of male participation in the Friendship Church.

The men interviewed were enthusiastic about the church and the male participation in the church. Many of the men interviewed compared the male participation in the Friendship Church with churches that they had been members of before Friendship. They were enthusiastic about the church, the Male Chorus, the Brotherhood, the Male Sunday School class and total ministry of the church.

What follows is some of the significant finding from the project data analysis. The data analysis was based on a detailed and comprehensive project interview questionnaire.

Hypothesis Supported

Only five of the men interviewed from the church were members of the Male Chorus increasing the validity and reliability of the data received. All 20 men who participated in this reflective empowerment project believe that the Male Chorus played a

role in the increase of other male ministries in Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (FMBC). These responses support this project's hypothesis that there has been an increase of male participation in FMBC because of the motivation provided by the Male Chorus.

Project Interview Questionnaire Analysis

1. 85 percent of the men strongly agree that it is important to be a member of a church family and 15 percent agree. A church family is a place of significance for these men. The men view church life as necessary.

2. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that attending church on a regular basis makes them a stronger Christian and 10 percent agree. Male presence in church activities is closely connected with male participation.

3. 75 percent of the men strongly agree that Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting and Bible Study are important to attend and 25 percent agree. The response for prayer meeting and bible study attendance is strong but their responses are not as strong as participation in other church activities.

4. 70 percent of the men strongly agree that attending Sunday Church School on a regular basis is essential to their spiritual growth and 30% agree. The men view their spiritual growth closely related to the Church Sunday School. (These results do not indicate whether they actually come to Sunday Church School.) The responses during the interview were even more enthusiastic than the writer anticipated.

5. 75 % of the men strongly agree that becoming a member of the Male Chorus encouraged them to join FMBC; 15 percent agree and 10 percent were undecided. The responses reveal strong support for this project's hypothesis.

6. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that the Brotherhood is an important male ministry in FMBC and 10 percent agree. There is strong support for the Brotherhood as a male ministry. The fellowship is very important with this group.

7. 50 percent strongly agree that being a member of the Usher and Greeting Ministries are meaningful to male in FMBC, 25 percent

agree and 25 percent are undecided. These ministries do not make the connection with the men as other church activities.

8. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that their faith in God has got 10 stronger over the past five years and 10 percent agree. The responses indicate a positive view about spiritual growth.

9. 95 percent of the men strongly agree that the Male Chorus, Male Ushers, Men's Sunday School Class, Brotherhood Ministry, Prayer Meeting, Bible Study, Fitness and Recreation Ministry have experienced a significant increase in male participation in FMBC in the last five years and 5 percent agree. The men view the increase of male participation as significant and noticeable.

10. 75 percent of the men strongly agree that the Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in FMBC, 15 percent agree and 10 percent were undecided. There is strong support for the role of the Male Chorus in the influence of male participation which is very consistent with item #5.

11. 85 percent strongly agree that the Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in other male ministries of the church and 15 percent agree. There is strong support for the impact of the male chorus on other ministries of the church.

12. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that ministry opportunities have motivated men to have a stronger sense of mission and purpose and 10 percent agree. The men support strongly the impact of ministry opportunities on a sense of mission and purpose. Making ministry opportunities known and available increase male participation and a sense of ministry.

13. 95 percent of the men strongly agree that men have been more of a motivating factor for their faith development and church participation than women and 5 percent agree. The men view the influence of men as very important for their faith and church participation even though women were also important.

14. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that men can motivate men to participate in church life more than women and 10 percent agree. This item reveals what men believe about male motivation for church participation.

15. 75 percent of men strongly agree that there were males in their families that motivated them to join the church, 15 percent agree

and 10 percent were undecided. These responses indicate that these men had male presence and motivation in their families.

16. 85 percent of the men strongly agree that there were males in their church who motivated them to join the church and 15 percent agree. Church males had great influence on men joined the church.

17. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that they encouraged other men to attend church and 10 percent agree. These men reach out to other men inviting them to church.

18. 85 percent of the men strongly agree that they encourage men to be more active in church life and 15 percent agree. These men support men in being more active in church activities.

19. 75 percent of the men strongly agree that they had positive male role models in their lives while growing up, 15 percent agree and 10 percent were undecided. These men had good male presence in their lives but the responses reflect that some of the men lacked positive male presence.

20. 90 percent of the men strongly agree that they invited others to attend FMBC for worship and 10 percent agree. These responses indicate that the men feel strongly enough about the church to invite others.

(The project interview questionnaire is in Appendix B.)

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research project has been exciting, challenging and often a journey of surprises. The project enabled the researcher to learn as much, or more about himself as the model of ministry being studied. A serious shortcoming, the lack of male participation in many churches has been a thriving ministry for Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Conway, South Carolina.

Mentors Ricky Woods and Terry Thomas helped the researcher see and understand the positive role and influence that numerous men had in his life. A strong male presence, providing influence and guidance in the life story of the researcher had been an unclear reality for the researcher before this Doctor of Ministry project unfolded.

Men could have been motivated by a love for singing, rather than a concern for ministry. This writer recognizes this possibility but the ministry task of the male choir led to other male ministries. The male choir helped to lead men to other ministries. The real question is what their real motivations were. More research needs to be done.

The literature review offered excellent insight into the history, purpose and message of the African American church. Understanding the culture of the African American church is necessary in understanding the identity, role, influence and empowerment of African American males. Outstanding works have been done to substantiate the history, faith and preaching in African American church life. The

literature, however, lacked significant work on the role of males in the African American church. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu has done meaningful, practical and scholarly work in regards to male ministries in the African American church; however, more work needs to be done by more researchers in a diversity of ministry settings.

Much of the existing literature deals with the African American church in general. Insight could be gained about the role of men in the history of this country and the evolution of the African American church; but specific research is needed in regard to the motivation, influence, culture and importance of African American males in the church. This area of focus is much desired by pastors and Christian workers.

Current literature offered numerous and specific examples of African American men, who have been encouraged, inspired and empowered by the church. The researcher has been motivated to offer a class or workshop on African American men empowered by the church. Lessons learned from empowered men can empower other men.

The context for this project began in 1950. Historically, the Friendship Church had always lacked significant male participation. When the researcher became the pastor in 1983, only about ten percent of the membership was men. The percent of men had increased to forty percent in 2009.

This study examined the increase of male participation in the Friendship Church. The model of ministry examined the hypothesis by using a questionnaire with twenty men of diverse backgrounds in the church. The responses of the twenty men participating in the research strongly supported the hypothesis. All of the men were very motivated and excited to participate in the research.

The theoretical foundation papers provided solid support for this research project. Major themes in the foundational papers were identity, liberation, oppression and empowerment. Oppression is a reality that has been a part of African American history and culture. The reality for males in the African American church is that their pains of alienation, societal negative stereotypes and the lack of meaningful male ministries have caused men to participate in church on a limited basis or to drop out totally. What African American men experience in life has historical beginnings, religious significance and personal effects. One must examine the totality of African American life in order to meet the unique needs, oppression and concerns of African American men.

The theological and biblical foundation papers offer insights on factors that lead to empowerment and for this research, male empowerment. Men are empowered when they are believed in, loved, trusted, accepted and given opportunities to be responsible and serve. Oppressed men were drawn to David because they believed that David understood their oppression and that he accepted them. These oppressed, outcast and alienated men found a sense of identity, purpose and mission in the leadership of David. The empowered and outcast men remained loyal to David. Empowerment leads to commitment and loyalty.

In the New Testament, Barnabas was the great encourager. He encouraged John Mark by his acceptance of him after Paul had rejected him. Later Paul would tell Barnabas to send John Mark after he had been left alone for his ministry mission. John Mark had earlier given up on the ministry mission with Paul. Paul would not forgive him and give him another chance. It was because of Barnabas that John Mark found a new

beginning with the ministry and Paul. Encouragement led to empowerment. Empowerment led to ministry and mission.

This researcher would like to see the factors examined retrospectively be implemented by congregations to examine whether there will be an increase of males. This would make an even stronger research project. It would be enlightening to examine whether the females in the congregation would support the hypotheses as strongly as the men. The females in the congregation often express their observation of increased male participation.

This researcher holds that increased male participation in the life of the church affects male/female, male/male, adult/children and even female/female relationships. More males participating in the ministry of the church affects not only church relationships but also the community in general. When males are encouraged and empowered, the African American community is more empowered.

The research project suggests that males are empowered when accomplishing some meaningful and successful task of ministry. Males become more motivated, responsible and more willing to take on greater tasks of ministry. The Male Chorus provided the means and motivation for men to increase in membership and increased participation in other ministries of the church. A male Sunday School Class was formed which has become the largest Sunday School Class in the church. Male participation in Wednesday night's prayer meeting and Bible study is about 50 percent; an increase from five to ten percent. Brotherhood participation has increased to approximately sixty men, an increase from five to eight men. Males are very active as ushers, greeters, trustees, deacons, recreational activates, cooks, teachers and mentors for the youth. Males

willingly take care of the church's yard work without pay. Males continue to have enthusiasm and commitment to the ministry of the church. Males are helping to motivate other males to participate and take on more tasks and responsibility. Male participation has increased in the Friendship Church because males are encouraged and empowered to be active in the ministries of the church.

An increase in male participation is more than techniques. It involves the total culture of the church. The culture must be positive, accepting, welcoming, friendly, family-oriented, loving and hopeful. The church must affirm and build relationships where every member is a brother and sister. The culture of the church sets the tone for the positive relationships. Loving relationships cannot be built if the culture of the church does not love. Everything in the life of the church—teaching, preaching, singing, praying, recreation, witnessing and evangelism—affects the culture of the church.

This researcher recognizes that all person of all races and sexes need love, acceptance, trust, opportunities and to be respected. This study does not claim that these elements of need are unique to African American males. This researcher holds that as a result of historic oppression, racism, negative, stereotypes and discrimination. African American males need acceptance, trust, respect and love. The research shows that males are empowered to believe in themselves to be responsible and equipped to do ministry. The church for African Americans is not limited to *spiritual* matters but is involved in and offers advice for practical and ordinary affairs of life.

The empowerment of African American males could have serious impact on the African American community and society, as a whole. Male empowerment for ministry will promote a sense of community among males. They will be supportive, caring and

motivational toward each other. Trust, relationships and respect will be enhanced. Family, church and community relationships could be strengthened. This could lead to a decrease in the African American prison population. More boys and girls will have responsible fathers, mentors and role models. Every empowered male will lead to positive results for the church, the community, families, and schools. They will also have positive impact on race relations.

Males who participated in the research questionnaire were positive about the church. This researcher contends that the participation of the men in the ministries of the church led to their appreciation, enthusiasm, gratitude and loyalty of the church. Too many persons in the church never commit themselves to ministries. Males who are serious about ministry promote a greater sense of fellowship, love, acceptance and commitment. Positive church males motivate other males and females to be positive church members. Strong male ministries can promote and enhance stronger churches.

This researcher holds that male participation is extremely important to the vitality of the African American church. More research needs to be done to understand the issues that are real in the lives of African American males. How to reach, encourage and empower males are urgent concerns for the church. Ministry for African American males, with and by African American males, must become more of a priority for the church.

APPENDIX A

FRIENDSHIP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

FRIENDSHIP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

In 1950, Dr. G. Going Daniels and a few of God's faithful servants under the guidance of the Holy Spirit founded the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. A meeting of these faithful members was held and the church authorized the purchase of property from Sis. Sarah Nesbitt.

The many members of the congregation and community joined in and gave their time and talents in the construction of the building which began in June, 1950. While our Church was under construction, the Mount Zion Holiness Church graciously allowed us to use their sanctuary to hold services. A meeting was held on July 10, 1950, for the election of church officers.

On July 11, 1950, the church re-convened a special meeting to ratify the newly elected officers and choose a church name. The pastor offered the name Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and that name was approved by the church body.

The second Sunday in July 1950, the church congregation, city mayor and citizens from all segments of the community marched from Mount Zion Holiness Church to the new church building. At the entrance, a prayer was offered asking God's blessing on the edifice. God blessed the Church and it continued to grow in membership.

In May 1961, the Church suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. G. Goings Daniels. It was not until February 1962, that the second pastor called, Rufus J. Daniels, the son of Dr. G. Goings Daniels. During Rev. Rufus J. Daniels' pastorate, the Church continued to prosper, membership increased and renovations were begun, which were completed in 1975.

The R. J. Daniels' Chorus, the Young Women's Auxiliary, the Learning Center, Bible Study Class, Children's Choir, the Brotherhood, and Prayer Band all came into existence during the pastorate of Rev. Rufus J. Daniels.

In the summer of 1982, the Church was blessed with a young seminary student, Charles Milton Pee, who served his internship under the direction of Pastor Daniels. Our hearts were saddened upon the great loss in the home going of Dr. R. J. Daniels. On April 5, 1983, the Church called its third pastor, Rev. Charles Milton Pee. He came with vigor, youthfulness and a desire to implement a biblically-based, total membership, and accountable Church financial program. He called for increased giving and reinforced tithing by all members. With this effort, the Church paid off the mortgage for the 1975 renovations. During this time, the first Seniors Citizen's Day, Male Ensemble, Youth Council, and Church membership classes were organized. In 1985, the Church purchased land for the construction of a new Edifice. In May 1990, the land was cleared and on January 3, 1993, a ground breaking ceremony was held at the site located at 1111 Grainger Road.

On September 5, 1993 at 11:00 A.M., the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church family had its first worship service in our new Edifice. It was both spiritual and blessed by the almighty God.

Our Church income has increased as a result of God's continued blessing and loyal stewardship by our members. We have been taught how to give sacrificially.

The Church membership has grown numerically and many of the Church records have been computerized. In April of 1999, the mortgage for the Church edifice was paid off after only 5 1/2 years of a 15-year mortgage.

Christian Education is a priority in our Church. Every member is encouraged to receive Christian Discipleship Training in the Church Membership Class, Sunday Church School, Bible Study, Leadership Training, and workshops. The Church ward system has been re-structured to accommodate our growing membership. Deacons and Trustees are availing themselves to increased service and ministry.

The Church has built a Christian Life Center and enlarged the existing Sanctuary to approximately 300 additional seats. The Christian Life Center, which includes a large gymnasium, classrooms, technology room, fitness room, and meeting areas, enables the Church to better accommodate the needs of our Church family, as well as the growing needs of our community. It has enhanced and enriched the Church's ministry.

Individual spirituality is necessary to live as disciples in family and to make disciples for our Lord. Every member is called upon to recognize that we are friends to our Lord because Jesus made it so. We are friends to each other because we are disciples of our risen Lord. We are on a mission to share and show this friendship that can transform lives, empower the weak, encourage the oppressed, and provide guidance on life's journey.

Our Church ministry has grown to meet the needs of a spiritually growing membership. Please continue to pray that God will continue to lead and bless the Friendship Church Family.

APPENDIX B

PROJECT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

The Agreement Model of the Likert Scale was used.

A Model for Male Participation in an African-American Church Interview Questions

Part 1: check the answer that best reflects your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. It is important to be a member of a church family.					
2. Attending church on a regular basis makes me a stronger Christian.					
3. It is important to attend Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting and Bible Study.					
4. Attending Sunday Church School on a regular basis is essential to my spiritual growth.					
5. Becoming a member of the Male Chorus encouraged me to join FMBC.					
6. The Brotherhood is an important male ministry in FMBC.					
7. Being a member of the Usher and Greeting ministry is meaningful to males in FMBC.					
8. My faith in God has gotten stronger over the past five years.					
9. The Male Chorus, Male Ushers, Men's Sunday School Class, Brotherhood Ministry, Prayer Meeting, Bible Study, Fitness and Recreation Ministry have experienced a significant increase in male participation in FMBC in the last five years.					
10. The Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in FMBC.					
11. The Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in other male ministries of the church.					
12. Ministry opportunities have motivated men to have a stronger sense of mission and purpose.					
13. Men have been more of a motivating factor for my faith development and church participation than women.					
14. Men can motivate men to participate in church life more than women.					
15. There were males in my family that motivated me to join the church.					

16. There were males in my church who motivated me to join the church.					
17. I encourage other men to attend church.					
18. I encourage men to be more active in church life.					
19. I had positive male role models in my life while I was growing up.					
20. I invite others to attend FMBC for worship					

What level of education did you complete?

___ A. Below High School
___ B. High School
___ C. Bachelor's Degree
___ D. Master's Degree

What is your age group?

___ A. Under 20
___ B. 20-30
___ C. 31-40
___ D. 41-50
___ E. 51-60
___ F. 61-70
___ G. 71 and above

A Model for Male Participation in an African-American Church

Analysis of Interview Questions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. It is important to be a member of a church family.	17	3			
2. Attending church on a regular basis makes me a stronger Christian.	18	2			
3. It is important to attend Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting and Bible Study.	15	5			
4. Attending Sunday Church School on a regular basis is essential to my spiritual growth.	14	6			
5. Becoming a member of the Male Chorus encouraged me to join FMBC.	15	3	2		
6. The Brotherhood is an important male ministry in FMBC.	18	2			
7. Being a member of the Usher and Greeting ministry is meaningful to males in FMBC.	10	5	5		
8. My faith in God has gotten stronger over the past five years.	18	2			
9. The Male Chorus, Male Ushers, Men's Sunday School Class, Brotherhood Ministry, Prayer Meeting, Bible Study, Fitness and Recreation Ministry have experienced a significant increase in male participation in FMBC in the last five years.	19	1			
10. The Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in FMBC.	15	3	2		
11. The Male Chorus played a role in the increase of male participation in other male ministries of the church.	17	3			
12. Ministry opportunities have motivated men to have a stronger sense of mission and purpose.	18	2			
13. Men have been more of a motivating factor for my faith development and church participation	19	1			

than women.					
14. Men can motivate men to participate in church life more than women.	18	2			
15. There were males in my family that motivated me to join the church.	15	3	2		
16. There were males in my church who motivated me to join the church.	17	3			
17. I encourage other men to attend church.	18	2			
18. I encourage men to be more active in church life.	17	3			
19. I had positive male role models in my life while I was growing up.	15	3	2		
20. I invite others to attend FMBC for worship	18	2			

What level of education did you complete?

A. Below High School (2)

B. High School (7)

C. Bachelor's Degree (8)

D. Master's Degree (3)

What is your age group?

A. Under 20
B. 20-30
C. 31-40 (2)
D. 41-50 (3)
E. 51-60 (5)
F. 61-70 (7)
G. 71 and above (3)

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